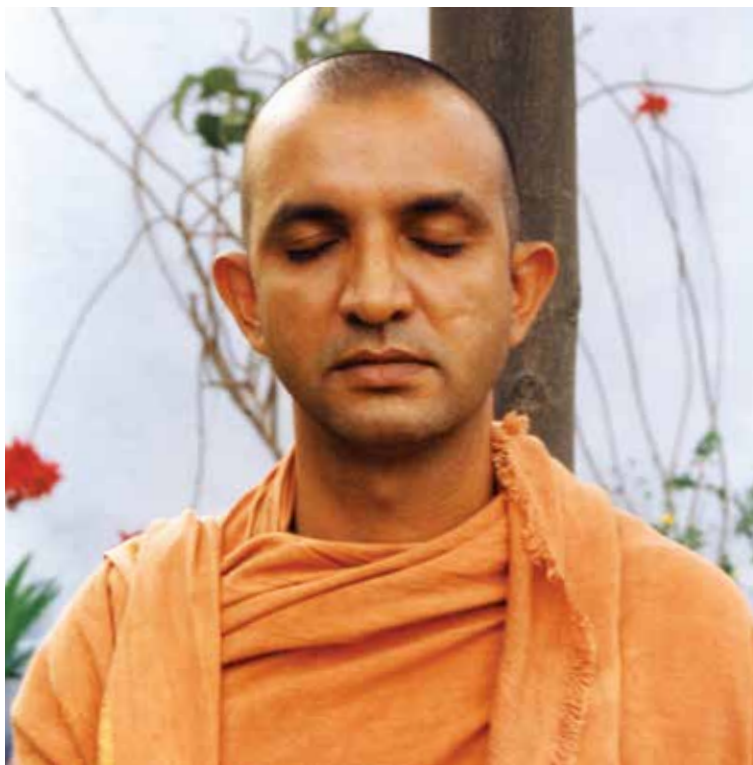


Significance of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

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Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

22nd to 24th January 2002, Nasik, India.



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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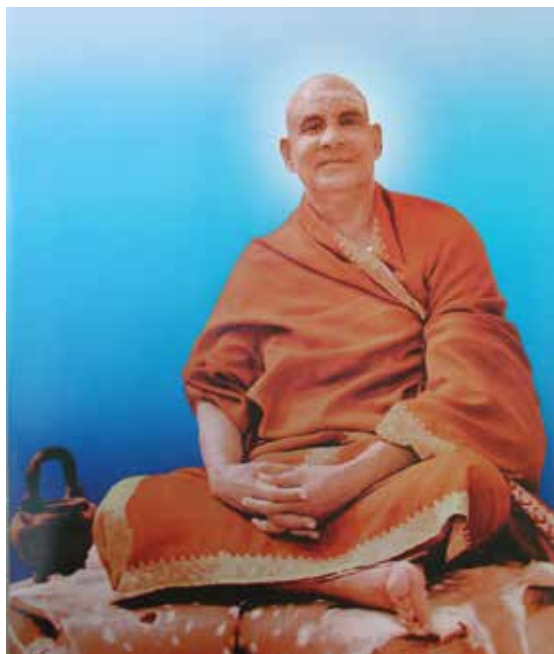
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

Significance of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra presents a compilation of satsangs and dharana practices given by Swami Niranjan-ananda Saraswati in 2002 to a group of sadhakas from Mumbai who gathered for a yoga retreat in Nasik from 22 to 24 January 2002. In just three days, Swamiji introduced them to a deeper understanding of this ancient scripture and gave the teachings to ensure they realized the wisdom contained in the text and glimpsed the experience invoked by its dharana practices.

The seminar was imbued with an expansive view of life made relevant to the life of each sadhaka, and this can extend to each sincere practitioner who reads this book.

Contents

1. Introduction to Tantra	1
2. The Significance of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra	10
3. Pratyahara and Dharana	17
4. Shvasa Dharanas	24
5. Cause of Bondage	38
6. Shoonya Panchaka Dharanas 1–3	45
7. Awakening of Sushumna	60
8. Shoonya Panchaka Dharanas 4–5	64
9. Integrated Practices of Shoonya Dharanas	71
Index of Dharanas	81
Glossary	83

1

Introduction to Tantra

T*antra* is a system, a process of discovery, a *sadhana* and not a philosophy. There is a difference between a philosophy, a *darshan*, and a process of discovery, a *sadhana*. Philosophy questions 'why'. The basic questions of philosophy are: why are we here, why this creation, why this world, why the pain, why the pleasure? The foundations of philosophy begin with such questions. However, when a process of *sadhana* is implemented, the 'why' is not discussed, but the 'how to do it' and 'when to do it'. How to discover the truth? How to realize the self? How to overcome the conflicting situations in life, such as pain and pleasure? 'How' becomes the basic foundation for going through a process and making further discoveries within the *sadhana*. Tantra is such a process.

There have been two main streams of thought and discovery in the Indian tradition. The stream of thought is the vedic system and the stream of discovery is the tantric system. Yoga, as an offshoot of tantra, is the development of a process which can be adopted in life to attain fulfilment, wholeness and completeness. It can be said that the vedic precepts represent the *jnana marga*, the path of knowing and understanding, and the yogic and tantric traditions represent the *karma marga*, the process of forward movement, activity and creative dynamism. *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is a text on the essence of yoga as described in the manifold Tantras.

Vedachara, path of knowledge

One aspect of tantra is *vedachara*, which means realizing and living the precepts of the vedic tradition in the form of knowledge. It involves the approach of questioning, ‘Who am I’, seeking answers, reflecting on each answer and then eliminating them. Again the process continues – again questioning, again thinking, again analyzing the answers of the world and spiritual realities, and eliminating them. In the vedachara aspect of tantra, these questions and their subsequent answers reflect the state of *vikalpa* or the thought patterns of the mind.

What will the answer be to the question, ‘Who am I?’ ‘I am atman’ or ‘I am spirit’ is not the right answer for us, because only a few saints have realized the nature of the atman. What is the nature of the *atman*, the spirit, for you? It is only an idea, formed by thought patterns based on concepts that you have heard, read and believed in. The answer, ‘I am spirit’, is only presenting an idea that literature, preachers and other thinkers have put forth. They do not reflect your own understanding or experience.

The answer, ‘I am the body’, is also not the correct answer. What part of the body? Is it the senses, the *jnanendriyas* and *karmendriyas*, by which one receives, processes, stores information, and expresses that information in the form of an activity? The sense experiences are changing all the time. Every day they change, along with their information and expression. They are not a constant experience. The same applies to the answers, ‘I am the brain’ or ‘I am the mind’. Does anyone know what the brain is, and what its potential is? Have the full potential and structure of the mind been understood or is there awareness only of the small part of the mind which expresses itself in one’s day-to-day life?

Swami Sivananda said that the real self is luminosity and he gave the following example. The light is switched on in a room, but the window shutter and the door are closed. Outside one can see rays of light coming from the crack under the door and the joints of the shutter. These rays,

however, are only a fraction of the luminosity inside the room. Swami Sivananda used to say that life in total could be compared to the light coming through the cracks. That is the light by which one lives and tries to understand and realize oneself. One has not been able to enter the closed room, which is full of luminosity.

According to yoga, the states of *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and even *savikalpa samadhi* lead only to the understanding and realization of the light coming through the cracks. One never enters the luminous room because the door is closed. The closed door represents *maya*, the power of illusion. One cannot question the power of *maya* because it clouds wisdom, veiling the spiritual aspect.

The power of *maya* is such that it can project a false reality. At night when a rope is seen lying on the road, it may be perceived as a snake. That is an illusion which one experiences, but the reality is different. The snake is actually a piece of rope, but that cannot be seen unless a light is shone on it. In the absence of light one imposes one's ideas and creates an illusion. In the same way, reality cannot be perceived as it is without imposing one's understanding and ideas on it, creating an illusory reality, which is totally different to that which exists. That is *maya*.

Maya is the door or the shutter which blocks the light and separates an individual from the divine. The darkness outside the room is *samsara*, the created, manifest world. Inside the room, where the light is switched on, is transcendence. Outside the room are self-created realities and experiences of bondage due to the influence of *maya*. Inside the room, there is liberation, freedom, and the experience of the luminous reality and essence.

In relation to *jnana marga*, the path of wisdom, as long as one identifies with the dualities of the world, the answers that one obtains are never real. They simply delude the mind and fix it to another illusory belief, thought or 'reality'. They do not engender the force of *mukti*, liberation or enlightenment.

The vedachara aspect of tantra is much deeper than intellectual questioning. It is not concerned with appearance; it is the process of realizing the eternal reality. It is not concerned with what is perceived by the senses, mind and feelings; it is the process of understanding reality as it is, emanating from the transcendental consciousness.

Yogachara, path of practice

Another component of tantra is *yogachara*, the process whereby one can overcome the *vikalpa*, the conflicts of the mind, and attain the *nirvikalpa* state which is beyond thought. The process of yoga is going from the vikalpa to the nirvikalpa state. Actually vikalpa are the conflicts or confusions which prevent one from grasping reality. The movement from the vikalpa state of life to the nirvikalpa state of life is attained through self-purification, self-awareness and self-effort. The process includes many types of yoga, such as hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga. The various yogas differ in their approach as they are meant for fulfilling the needs of diverse dimensions of the human personality. No yoga is complete in itself, but all are complementary to each other. Their main focus or purpose is to reach the state of nirvikalpa, where the individual experiences liberation from the ties that hold consciousness to the worldly plane, and becomes luminous.

The *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is a text illuminating the yogachara path of practice but it also includes elements from the other branches of tantra.

Siddhantachara, path of perfection

The third component of tantra is *siddhantachara*. *Acharya* means conduct, how one should conduct oneself. *Siddhanta* is made up of two words: *siddha*, perfect and *anta*, end, which together mean ‘one whose termination is perfect’. The word siddhanta is used to denote a philosophical process and a process that ends in perfection.

If one goes from one room to another, it is not only the legs that move, the whole body moves: the internal organs, the mind, thoughts and emotions move, the entire being moves from one location to another. When one reaches the end of the journey as a complete being, that is *siddhanta*, because one did not leave any part of the body, mind or nature behind. As one moved, everything moved as a unit.

The teaching of tantra is that one should live in the present. In normal life, the whole nature does not move together. Memories often obstruct the forward movement, due to identification with situations and environments which gave peace and pleasure previously. This becomes quite evident during meditation when these types of memories come up. However, when unpleasant memories start to surface, the reaction, 'No, I can't be like this,' arises because one has a different self-image which is created by the ego.

The function of the ego is to hide the real nature and to live in identification with pride, so that one does not recognize one's negative qualities. When negativity comes up, a person generally tries to suppress it or hide it under the garb of goodness. In this way one tries to create a positive self-image but this is an activity of *ahamkara*, ego-identity, which only highlights one aspect of one's nature and suppresses the other aspects. The *vasanas*, deep-rooted hidden desires, *samskaras*, impressions, archetypes and karmas are still inside and continue to remain inside. When one cooks food, the remnants of the food remain in the pot, stuck to the sides and the bottom, until the pot is cleaned. If it is not cleaned, the remaining food becomes hard and sticks even more. That is the condition of one's life.

In the next life one comes back with the same dirty mind, the same dirty pot. If one continues to cook without cleaning, the layers of residue build up, becoming thicker and thicker. Each time one cooks in that dirty pot, the previous *samskaras* and karmas, which are stuck to the sides, intermingle with the new food being cooked because the entire pot is being heated. Whatever one cooks always has a funny odour and

colour. These different colours are known as the *gunas*, fundamental qualities of life. The *gunas* and their associated *vruttis*, modifications, along with the *karmas* and *samskaras*, colour one's life: one's nature, ideas, beliefs, mentality and expressions. In order to clean the pot, one has to scrub it.

One cannot expect enlightenment when the pot of life has a thick layer of *samskara*, *karma* and *vasana* which have been carried on from previous lives. Therefore, *shuddhi*, the action of cleaning, is necessary. When *shuddhi* is not there, the layers of residue accumulate and harden in the pot. One may pour fresh water into the pot in order to cook something, but one cannot expect the water to remain clean. However, once the water is heated through the fire of yogic *sadhana*, the hardened layers of *samskaric* and *karmic* residue flake off. Those flakes manifest in the mind in the form of experiences one may have in *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. At a gross level, one may think, "Oh, I can't control my thoughts," or "I can't control the tremors in my body," or "I can't control this awakening within myself," or "I can't progress beyond a certain point." These are the types of difficulties people generally face as they go through the process of self-purification.

Siddhantachara is a process of realizing and perfecting the awareness of the present moment, and not leaving a trail of consciousness behind, which is being coloured and tinted by good and bad memories. Therefore, for the yogi or *sadhaka* nothing should be good and nothing should be bad. One should not hanker for, or be attached to, the positive experiences, nor should one reject the negative experiences. Through the development of wisdom one must know them both, and continue with the journey. Real wisdom applies not just in realization, but in continuation. For example, I had the *darshan* of my guru yesterday, but that doesn't mean I should expect it today. I had the *darshan* of my *ishta*, chosen deity, one month ago, but it doesn't mean I should expect to have it again today. I had the experience of luminosity, peace and bliss in the past but I am not expecting it to happen

today. If it happens, well and good. However, one should not be attached to the past, but move the spirit forward, along with consciousness and energy, and maintain the effort to come to the perfect culmination of life's journey. That is *siddhantachara*, the third component of tantra.

Dakshinachara, right-hand path

The fourth component of tantra is *dakshinachara*. The word *dakshina* means right, *dakshinachara* is the right side or right hand of tantra. However, the word 'right' as it is used here implies the *pingala nadi*, the solar energy flow and the pranic or vital aspect of life. In *dakshinachara*, an effort is made to release the energy which is contained in material as well as subtle forms within the human personality and psyche. That is the meaning of *dakshinachara*: the right hand, the solar aspect, the pranic awakening of tantra. *Prana*, energy, plays a major role in life because energy is the essence of creation. It is not the thoughts, but *prana* which binds us to this worldly dimension. The *samskaras* and *vasanas* do not bind us to this world, rather they are experiences which arise and manifest in this world.

The real bondage and cause of bondage is *prana shakti*, and this has to be liberated. *Prana shakti* is also *nada shakti*; *prana* and *nada* are not two different things. *Prana shakti* is the energy aspect of *nada shakti*, and wherever there is energy, there is *nada* or sound. When sound becomes manifest, it is known as *varna*. The alphabets are called *varna mala*, sequences of sounds. *Varna* is the manifest sound and *nada* is the unmanifest sound. *Varna* is expressed because of *prana shakti*.

In the external aspect of the manifest world, *prana shakti* is the breath. While speaking, the breath and *varna* are used. Breath is the manifest external *prana* and the words that one hears are the manifest external *varna* of the subtle *nada*. In the external sense this is the process of speech.

However, when one internalizes and becomes aware of more subtle aspects, *prana shakti* is not the breath but the energy responsible for life, in this form and dimension, and

in others. Similarly, ‘internal speech’ is not varna, but nada. What is the spiritual transmission between guru and disciple? What is the telepathic transmission between two people? During spiritual and telepathic transmission, there is no use of words, varna, or breath. Those transmissions take place through prana and nada.

Freeing prana and realizing nada is the aim and direction of the dakshinachara aspect of tantra.

Vamachara, the left-hand path

The fifth component of tantra is *vamachara*. People confuse vamachara with indulgence in the pleasures of life. The word *vama* means left. Vamachara is known as the left hand of tantra, however, the word ‘left’ relates to *ida nadi*, the moon and the subtle mind.

In the yogic tradition the vital force of pingala nadi is known as *prana shakti*, the subtle force of ida nadi is known as *chitta shakti*, and the transcendental force of sushumna nadi is known as *chit shakti*. This is not the same as the chitta which is part of the *antahkarana*, the fourfold inner tool of the mind composed of manas, buddhi, chitta, and ahamkara. In relation to the antahkarana, *chitta* is memory, but in relation to ida nadi, *chitta shakti* means the introverting energy of ida nadi which counterbalances the extroverting prana shakti of pingala nadi.

Chit represents the transcendental Self, as in *sat-chit-ananda*: God is referred to as *sat*, truth, *chit*, transcendental consciousness, and *ananda*, bliss. In the context of nadis, *chit* relates to the transcendental *sushumna nadi*.

In relation to vamachara, one can say that chitta is the subtle, internal force of consciousness in the total interactive mind. The awakening of this mental energy leads to permanence in the experience. This is the purpose of vamachara – not sex, wine, chillum or indulgence in the pleasures of the body, senses, brain or mind.

Nobody can teach anyone how to love because then love becomes a process which leads to a conditioned experience.

When you love in that way, you become an actor, rather than an experienter. However, if love is spontaneous there is no acting. Nobody has to show you or teach you how to love because it is natural, and when love is natural it becomes an unconditional experience. Moving from a conditioned state of expressing the qualities of life to an unconditioned state where life becomes an experience is the vamachara aspect of tantra. The goal of vamachara is not indulgence, but destroying all conditions and establishing oneself in the highest experience.



2

The Significance of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra

In India, Tantra has not been recognized as one of the six major systems of Indian philosophy known as the *shat darshana*. The six are:

1. *Vedanta*, which describes the path of knowing the totality of existence, *jnana marga*. Vedanta used to be called *Uttara Mimamsa*.
2. *Mimamsa*, which describes ritual actions, *karmas*. It is usually called *Karma Mimamsa* and it is also known as *Poorva Mimamsa*.
3. *Samkhya*, which gives an understanding of the gross and the subtle components of life, from ahamkara to tattwas to tanmatras to the material body.
4. *Nyaya* – a philosophy which deals with logic.
5. *Vaisheshika* – a philosophical treatise on atoms, which is also one of the six systems of thought.
6. *Yoga*.

Yoga is classified as one of the shat darshananas, but this yoga refers more to the raja yoga of Sage Patanjali, and not the entire spectrum of yoga. Yoga as a *darshana*, a philosophy, discusses only Sage Patanjali's yoga and not kundalini yoga, hatha yoga, bhakti yoga, mantra yoga, laya yoga and others. Sage Patanjali refers to the vision of yoga where the highest state of consciousness is reached; however, yoga is not only a part of the philosophical systems of India, it is an experiential lifestyle.

Tantra is not considered to be one of the shat darshanas of India because it primarily represents the path of experience, and not the path of rationality.

Definition of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra

The essence of yoga as described in the Tantras is presented to us in the text known as *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*. According to the yogic and tantric concepts, the meaning of vijnana is not just science. *Vijnana* is comprised of two words: *vishesh* meaning special and *jnana* denoting knowledge, so vijnana is special knowledge. This specialized knowledge, whether achieved through yoga, self-experimentation or *sadhana*, following a pattern, a sequence of practices, is known as vijnana. Knowledge, which is experiential, correct and true, is known as vijnana. This vijnana encompasses physical and spiritual science.

The meaning of *bhairava* is derived from three roots: *bha*, which comes from *bharan*, meaning sustenance; *ra* from *raven*, withdrawal; and *va* from *vaman*, manifestation. Sustenance, withdrawal and manifestation is the definition of the word *bhairava*. Therefore, the meaning of *Vijnana Bhairava* is specialized knowledge of the sustenance, withdrawal and manifestation processes. *Bhairava* derived from *ravayati*, ‘to howl or wail’, is the state of consciousness just before the final union with Lord Shiva, as universal consciousness occurs and individual identity drops away. *Bhairavi* is Bhairava’s female counterpart.

Tantra is a very ancient science of how one can transcend one’s present level of evolution. It is a way where one’s own destiny can be woven, and one’s inner nature be strengthened through self-discipline, ritual worship, *sadhana* based on mantra, yantra, mandala and meditation. *Tantra* is composed of two roots: *tan* from *tanoti*, which implies expanding consciousness, and *tra* from *trayati*, which implies liberating energy.

The *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is part of the *Rudrayamala Tantra*. *Rudra* is an ancient name of Lord Shiva used in the

Rigveda. It means, literally, to howl or wail, and signifies the end of the little self as the *rudra granthi*, the psychic knot or barrier between ajna and sahasrara is penetrated. *Yamala* is his female consort.

Identifying with Bhairava

In *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (9–14), Devi asks her guru Lord Shiva about the nature of Bhairava. He answers:

*Tadasaaratayaa devi vijneyam shakrajaalavat;
Maayaasvapnopamam chaiva gandharvanagarabhramam.*

O Devi, the aspect with form of Bhairava is insubstantial and of no spiritual value, like the illusory dream-like web of Indra, and the delusion of celestial musicians. (9)

*Dhyaanaartham bhraantabuddheenaam
kriyaadambaravartinaam;
Kevalam varnitam pumsaam vikalpanihitatmanaam.*

(The sadhanas with form) are described for those people of deluded intellect, who are prey to distracted thought patterns or are inclined towards the performance of action and ostentatious rituals to traverse the path of meditation. (10)

*Tattvato na navaatmaasau shabdaraashirna bhairavah;
Na chasau trishiraa devo na cha shaktitrayaatmakah.*

In reality (the essence) of Bhairava is not the nine forms, nor the garland of letters, nor the three flows and not even the three powers of shakti. (11)

*Naadabindumayo vaapi na chandraardhanirodhikaah;
Na chakrakramasambhinno na cha shaktisvaroopakah.*

His (Bhairava's) form (cannot be perceived) in nada and bindu, nor even in the obstructed half moon, nor in the piercing of successive chakras, nor does *shakti*, or energy, constitute his essence. (12)

*Aprabuddhamateenaam hi etaa baalavibheeshikaah;
Maatrimodakavatsarvam pravrittyartham udaahritam.*

These things have been told (about the form of Bhairava), like the tales used to frighten children, to induce people of immature intellect to follow the spiritual path, just as the mother entices her child with sweets. (13)

*Dikkaalakalanonmuktaa deshoddessaavisheshinee;
Vyapadeshtum ashakyaasaavakathyaa paramaarthatah.*

Ultimately (that state of Bhairava) cannot be measured in terms of time, space or direction, nor can it be indicated by any attribute or designation. (14)

For the sadhaka of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, the ultimate identification is with the state of Bhairava. Normally, in advanced spiritual practices one has to identify with *Sadashiva*, the eternally auspicious state of harmony and balance. In *Vijnana Bhairava* one identifies with the state of Bhairava, as one cannot come to the state of tranquillity until one is aware of the universal inhalation and exhalation: the sustenance, withdrawal and manifestation of the universe.

First one has to know the differentiated nature of the Self, which is expansion, contraction and maintenance. This leads to the knowledge of the undifferentiated Self, which is tranquillity or peace. Before one can realize *Sadashiva*, one has to understand Bhairava. Before one can come to the state of absolute tranquillity, one has to know the cosmic process of creation, dissolution and sustenance.

Vijnana Bhairava Tantra presents us with a major sadhana of the Tantras. It takes the practitioner to a state where one transcends the physical identification and realizes the expansion and contraction happening at the cosmic level. The practices of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* do not lead directly to samadhi, but create awareness of different states that affect, influence and alter the mind.

Practices of dharana

The practices enumerated in *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* are dharana techniques. *Dharana* or one-pointed concentration is the sixth *anga*, or limb, of yoga as described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. Once one comes to this stage of yoga, one realizes the great relevance of the cosmic breath, *brahmashvasa*. In Indian mythology and scriptures, it is said that when *Brahma*, the Creator in the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, breathes out, creation takes place and when he breathes in, creation is absorbed back into him. Cosmic exhalation is creation and cosmic inhalation is dissolution, this is the universal rhythm or cycle. Knowledge of birth and death in this cosmic play of creation and dissolution is the highest realization of dharana. It indicates the point where the meditative state shifts from dharana to dhyana. The process involves the realization of one's *swaroopa*, one's own essence, as the essence of all, which takes one to the understanding of *Brahman*, the eternal cosmic consciousness, the one reality of Vedanta. The *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* assures us (15–16):

*Antah svaanubhavaanandaa vikalponmuktagocharaa;
Yaavasthaa bharitaakaaraa bhairavee bhairavaatmanah.*

One can have this inner experience for oneself when the mind is free from modifications or thought patterns. The atman of Bhairava, which is known as Bhairavi, is then experienced as the bliss of one's own inner awareness, a state whose form is fullness, free from all contradictions (which is the abode of the entire universe). (15)

*Tad vapus tattvato jneyam vimalam vishvapooranam;
Evamvidhe pare tattve kah poojyah kashcha tripyati.*

The essence of his nature is known to be free of dross and pervades the entire universe. This being the nature of the highest reality, who is the object of worship and who is to be pacified by worship? (16)

This is the process as described in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*. The essence of all is *atman*, spirit or soul. Realizing that this *atman* is one's own *swarupa*, self or being, and the same spirit in all, leads to the realization of Brahman, and the realization of Brahman takes one to immortality.

In practice, this realization involves a process of perfect interiorization. The first stage of this process is internalization of consciousness. The second stage is the passage from the state of differentiating awareness to non-differentiating awareness, from *vikalpa* to *nirvikalpa*. The third stage is the disappearance of the 'I' factor and identification with the universal nature. Here loss of the self-limiting form of *ahamkara* and identification with the cosmic being *Aham* is experienced. The fourth and final stage is dissolution where *chitta*, individual consciousness, becomes *chit*, transcendental, illumined consciousness.

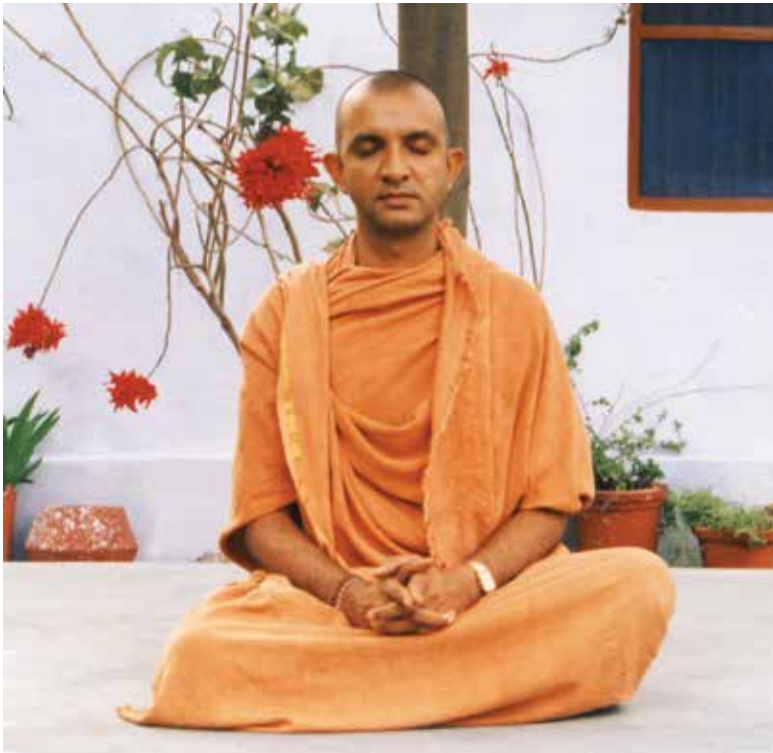
The plateau of yoga

This text deals directly with knowledge of dharana and how it is to be practised. The different systems, as defined in the Tantras, make it clear that the last point of human effort or practice is only up to dharana. Sage Patanjali's yoga darshana is often defined as *ashtanga yoga*, the eight-fold path of yoga, but where does one go after the eighth step? Eight steps imply a possibility of a ninth and tenth step – something higher. But in reality Sage Patanjali's yoga darshana is only *shadanga* or six-fold yoga. After perfecting the six-fold path of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara and dharana, one comes to a plateau.

The steps and directions are defined from yamas to dharana and involve practices, the effort of climbing, but then the path becomes flat. The beginning of the plateau is dhyana, and as one traverses it, it merges into samadhi. Dhyana and samadhi are not practices. They are states of mind where time, space and object are transcended, where *chitta* is dissolved into *chit*. It can be said that Sage Patanjali described six transformative stages of yoga and spoke about

the last two as states of continuous experience of purification and transcendence of being. Dharana is the last of six transformative stages of yoga in this system.

When one starts school, one does not know anything, and one has to learn everything, from reading and writing to mathematics, history, geography, science, and so on. Once one graduates from university and adopts a profession, everything one has learned before becomes a continuous state which accompanies one until death. In the same manner *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* indicates that the practical dimension of learning, and practising yoga sadhana ends at the dharana level. Dhyana is based on the continuity of the experiences that were gained before: experiences of stillness, firmness and one-pointedness, leading to samadhi.



3

Pratyahara and Dharana

Before going into the actual practices of dharana in *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, it is important to understand the ideas of pratyahara and dharana as described and used in the tantric tradition. Pratyahara is not only a limb of yoga in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* – it marks the beginning of the meditative process. *Pratyahara* is defined as the withdrawal of the senses from objects, but it actually deals with the experiences in the sensorial world. The body has ten senses, the five karmendriyas and five jnanendriyas. It experiences the effects of prana shakti in the form of the five pranas: *prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana* and *vyana*, and is subject to knowledge, *jnana*, and desire, *iccha*, created within the conscious mind. In due course, *iccha* is followed by *kriya*, action.

Management of the pratyayas

The self associates with the world it lives in through the medium of the senses, mind and expression of emotions. Emotion is a twofold experience: it is a reactive experience in the world, and a passive, focused state within the mind and personality. When the harmonious state of emotion at the deeper levels of mind and personality comes in contact with the senses and objects of the world, the emotional response becomes reactive, for example frustration at non-achievement is a reaction.

These reactive experiences in turn create conditions in the deep subconscious. This conditioning is known as *pratyaya*, the seeds or archetypes that shape the personality. Pratyahara is a means of realizing and releasing the *pratyaya* or conditioning, which has been created. Pratyahara achieves this by bringing to the consciousness the different manifestations of emotion and intellect.

The association of the senses with name, form, idea and the impressions received at the conscious level from the outside world is subject to time, space and object. It creates seeds or *pratyaya*. These seeds create the corresponding knowledge. Every seed has an attribute attached to it. A seed without attributes does not exist. The seed of a cucumber gives birth to a cucumber plant. The seed of a mango gives birth to a mango tree, not a banana or an apple tree. This means that each seed contains an attribute, which sprouts when the right conditions are created for it.

In the same manner, the *pratyayas* at the deepest levels of the subconscious also have particular attributes, *vasanas*, which are inherent in them because of the association of the self with the created world. The realization of the association between the peaceful self and the agitated, conflicting world is the aim of *pratyahara*, and is achieved through the management of the *pratyayas*.

Reversal of consumption and gratification

The word *pratyahara* consists of two parts: *aahara* means to consume as in consumption of food. When one consumes something, there is a sense of fulfilment. When one consumes food, there is fulfilment, *tripti*. Similarly, when one consumes pleasure through the senses, the senses are gratified. When one consumes through the body, the body is gratified. When one consumes through the mind or emotions, the mind or emotions are gratified. In this manner, *aahara* is a continuous process of consumption and gratification. The search for pleasure, whether through external or other means, is part of this search for gratification of *aahara*. When the word *prati*

is added to aahara, it implies reversal of this process. This means that one has to release, rather than accumulate, what is inside.

In *pratyahara*, the conditioning must be brought up to the field of conscious awareness, observed, analyzed and released. This is the process in all practices of *pratyahara*. In yoga nidra the dormant impressions in the subconscious, which one has blocked or doesn't want to identify with, are brought up to the level of the conscious mind. Otherwise, when these impressions are blocked, they remain as internal seeds or conditioning, *pratyaya*.

Pratyahara deals with the release of *pratyaya*. It leads to harmony of the conscious mind, and the harmonious manifestation of emotions. It also leads to the realization of their association with the *gunas*, because the world is full of subtle qualities, known as the *gunas*. These *gunas* are the creation of *maya* or *prakriti*, and they influence every level of experience. This is the subject matter of *pratyahara*. When mastery in *pratyahara* is gained, *dharana* begins.

The aim of dharana

Dharana works with the subtle mind, which is the storehouse of everything that is manifest and unmanifest, transcendental and divine. The aim of *dharana* is to awaken the energies that are contained within the psychic nature and personality. *Dharana* is often defined as concentration, but this is not the complete meaning of *dharana* – concentration is just the first step, the beginning of the process of focusing the awareness in the deepest realms of human nature and personality.

One definition of *dharana* is the ability to hold a mental state, without any fluctuation or dissipation of awareness. However, *dharana* can also be defined as awareness of the three qualities of life: *iccha*, *kriya* and *jnana*. These are the three attributes inherited from the divine. Just as the genes of the parents are inherited in the physical life, the genes of the divine are inherited in the psychic and spiritual life. Physical genes are different to psychic genes. Physical

genes are known as DNA, the psychic genes are reflected in the intricate processes of *iccha*, *kriya* and *jnana*. They are the three qualities of one's nature, one's *swabhava*, which come into play at the most mundane as well as at the most transcendental levels of existence.

Iccha, kriya and jnana

The three qualities of *swabhava* are inherent in God, the universe and creation. Creation has come forth because of desire, *iccha*. If God did not have the desire to become many, we would not be here today. We are here because of *iccha shakti*, the will of God. If *iccha* were not given form as *kriya*, action, the entire creation would lack variety. The variety of forms that exist in the animate world, from vegetables to trees, from insects to reptiles to mammals to humans, is because of the *kriya shakti* of God. Even the inanimate world of elements, minerals and other forms, which exist in a state of dormancy, represent the *kriya shakti* of God.

All existence would have the same singular form if *kriya shakti* were not there. Fire, for example, has a singular form. Whether one burns wood, paper or any other object, all one sees is fire, and not a variety of fires. In the same manner, all creation would have a singular form, and that single form would be *prakasha*, luminosity. Cessation of *kriya shakti*, the active power of God which results in the multitude of beings and experiences, leads one back to the luminosity of God which represents *jnana shakti*.

As long as one is subject to the *kriya* power, one experiences variety. Pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow are various experiences subject to action. However, in the absence of action, these experiences do not arise. There is no question of pain and pleasure. There is only *sthita*, stillness, and *samyabhava*, equanimity.

In that stillness one experiences only luminosity. The effort is to attain *samyabhava*, where one becomes free from the effects of *karma* and *kriya*.

Samyavastha

In yogic terminology, the accumulated effects of *iccha* and *kriya* are known as *karmashaya*, and overcoming the effects of action leads to the attainment of *samyavastha*, the harmonious condition of life. In *samyavastha* there is neither desire nor action. Only one attribute remains, *jnana*, which is the third quality inherited from the divine. This *jnana*, in the form of awareness, is later identified as the witnessing attitude of *drashta* or *sakshi bhava* and indicates a high degree of awareness. That awareness begins with one's self and extends into the universe.

The tantric and yogic traditions say that one should first become aware of oneself by realizing body, mind and nature. Once awareness has extended into the physical and psychological realms it will carry one into the spiritual realm, enabling one to realize and understand one's *svaroopa*, one's own form.

God is selfless form, while humans and other beings in creation are self-contained forms. Even a rock contains consciousness and energy, although one may not perceive it. Without the inherent combination of consciousness and energy, the rock would not be there, nor would any mineral, vegetable, animal or human exist. Without consciousness and energy, neither *prakriti* nor creation would exist. When one's own self is experienced in the highest form, one realizes the union of consciousness and energy within.

According to *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, the *Rudrayamala Tantra* and other tantric and yogic texts, the techniques of *dharana* aim at harmonizing *iccha*, *kriya* and *jnana* at the deepest levels of existence. In this context, *dharana* is the final stage in which one works with one's manifest nature. In *dhyana* one does not really work with one's manifest nature. In *dhyana* one is established in the experience of peace, bliss and harmony, so there is nothing to discover, *dhyana* is the state of complete union, *sayujyata*. It is at the level of *dharana* that one aims to discover one's nature or *swabhava*, release the *samskaras*, understand the *gunas*, and gain the ability to go into the deepest levels of one's manifest personality.

Faith – Ishwara pranidhana

Dharana can never be complete without the development of faith in a higher reality. In fact, it is the acceptance of a higher reality which awakens the state of dharana. For this reason, the tantric and yogic texts talk about *Ishwara pranidhana*, surrender to God or the eternal reality.

Pratyahara and dharana are synonymous with Ishwara pranidhana in the sense that making a sincere effort in meditation indicates that one is aware of the association with the higher reality. Only when one becomes aware of the association with the transcendental reality is there an urge to go towards it by overcoming the vikalpas of body, senses and mind.

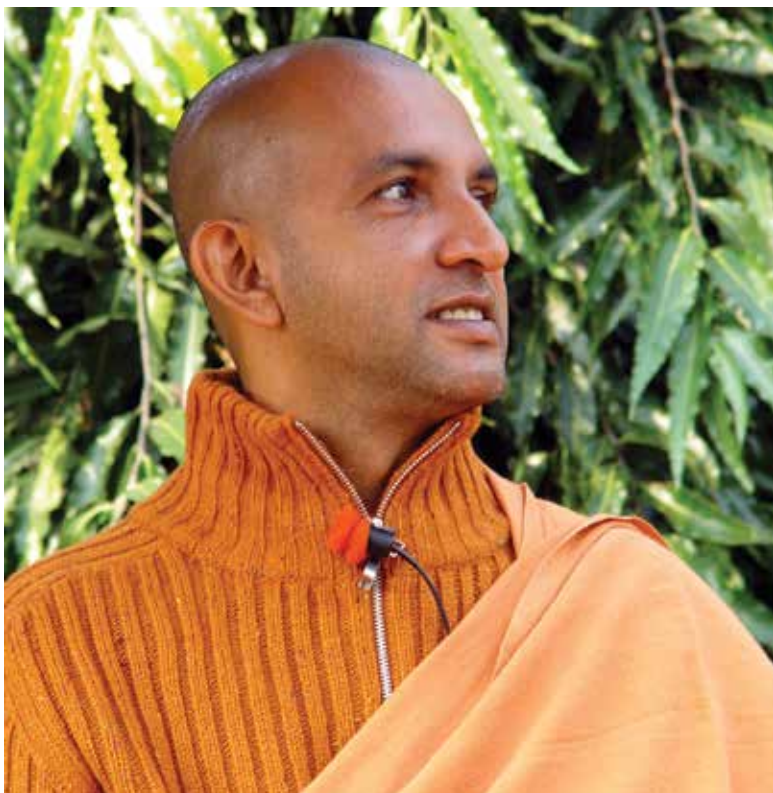
Faith in a higher reality is like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. When one is walking through a tunnel it is pitch-dark, and only a distant speck of light at the end of the tunnel is the guide. By fixing one's vision on the tiny point of light at the end, one walks through the tunnel. Without that light in the distance one would be overcome with fear and unable to find the way. In the same manner, Ishwara pranidhana, faith in a higher reality, becomes the focus of awareness in both pratyahara and dharana. Ishwara pranidhana creates a condition of optimism, confidence and security within the self – there is the knowledge of a goal towards which one has to walk.

When one starts walking towards the goal, naturally the whole mind is focused on it. The light is seen in the distance, but at the same time, one extends the awareness in all directions to ensure that one doesn't trip over anything lying on the path. The focus is the light, but the awareness extends all around. If one stubs a toe on some stone, one becomes even more careful. Each step is taken with greater awareness. Ishwara pranidhana results in both focus and awareness, which are two essential requirements in the meditative process.

Focus enables one to move forward with optimism and confidence, knowing that the end is in sight and one is going

to reach it. Focus provides direction on the point which one can see in the distance allowing one to proceed. Awareness perceives everything around, ensuring that each step is tested as one walks. The focus of awareness on Ishwara is necessary in order to perfect pratyahara and dharana.

In the context of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, the 'Ishwara', the form of God that one approaches and surrenders to, is Bhairava/Bhairavi. The efforts made in dharana are to bring one to a state of mind where one is ready to drop the barriers between oneself and the infinite consciousness of Lord Shiva. However, that is the light far away at the end of the tunnel, for now let's proceed step by step, beginning with simple practices.



4

Shvasa Dharanas

The practice of dharana in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* starts with awareness of *shvasa*, the breath, which is used as a focus to internalize the mind. It is implied that pranayama should be perfected before one attempts to practise and perfect dharana.

In the first dharana, awareness is focused on the stillness one experiences for a fraction of a second when the incoming breath changes into the outgoing breath. Further stages of this dharana include the addition of mantra at the time of inhalation and exhalation. The movement of breath may also be experienced in different parts of the body. However, there is a restriction on kumbhaka during this practice. If kumbhaka is done intentionally, the practice is no longer dharana. It becomes a practice of pranayama where breath is regulated. Dharana has nothing to do with the physical body, the senses and the physical perception, rather it works at deeper levels of consciousness.

Breath control is a conscious process even in the practice of ajapa japa, where one is moving the mantra with the breath. In pranayama and some techniques of pratyahara there is conscious attention on the breath; in dharana one goes beyond that. There is no need to follow the breath with attention. The only need is to become aware of the gap which is a fraction of a second long when the breath changes from incoming to outgoing and vice-versa.

SHVASA DHARANA I

Practice

Get ready for the introductory practice of *shvasa dharana*, concentration on the breath.

Take a comfortable meditation posture that you can hold with the back and head straight, hands on the knees in a mudra of your choice, and the eyes gently closed.

Take some time to adjust the body comfortably.

Check the whole body, releasing any points of tension and making any necessary adjustment.

Let the whole body relax and begin the practice of *kaya sthairyam*, making the whole body still.

Make a resolve to let the whole body remain still throughout the practice.

See the body, as though in a full length mirror; no movement.

Feel the whole body, steady and firm like a tree rooted in the ground.

The physical body is so still that you can clearly feel the breath moving inside the body.

Be aware of the natural breath.

Now the practice of *shvasa dharana* one begins.

Observe the natural breath, without holding or lengthening the breath at the time of inhalation or exhalation.

While watching the breath, imagine you are drawing the air in from an external point about 10 cm away from the nosetip, and follow its movement through the respiratory passages. At the time of exhalation, the breath turns and flows back out to the same external point.

Continue to follow the natural movement of the breath in and out for some time.

At the turning point between inhalation and exhalation, become aware of the gap when the breath stops for a fraction of a second before it turns back.

Focus your concentration on that fraction-of-a-second gap.

Do not try to hold the breath intentionally in order to extend that fraction of a second into a minute or into two or three minutes, because that will defeat the entire purpose of this dharana.

When you are aware of that fraction of a second, stop all thought and concentrate only on that point of inaction.

Experience the emptiness, the *shoonya*, of that point, where there is no movement of thought or breath.

Now become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness – not the space between but the breath itself. Be aware of the natural breath.

Take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the body. Be aware of the body in its meditation posture – aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings.

Externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Practise palming, rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Practise three times and then gently open the eyes.

The length of respiration can be gradually increased over a period of time. When this dharana is perfected, the respiration should extend for 12 finger widths, so that you can just feel the incoming and outgoing breath at a distance of 12 *angulas*, finger widths (about 20 cm), from the tip of the nose.

The *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* introduces this series of dharanas (24–27):

Shree Bhairava uvaacha:

*Oordhve praano hyadho jeevo visargaatmaa parochcharet;
Utpattidvitayasthaane bharanaad bharitaa sthitih.*

Sri Bhairava said:

Paradevi, whose nature is *visarga*, or creation, manifests as the upward moving prana and downward moving apana (inhalation and exhalation). Fixing the mind on where these two generate (gives) the state of fullness. (24)

*Maruto'ntar bahir vaapi viyadyugmaanivartanaat;
Bhairavyaa bhairavasyettham bhairavi vyajyate vapuh.*

When the ingoing and outgoing *marutas* (energies that ride the breath) are both restrained from returning, in that space the essence of Bhairava, which is not different from Bhairavi, manifests. (25)

*Na vrajen na vishechchhaktir marudroopaa vikaasite;
Nirvikalpatayaa madhye tayaa bhairavaroopataa.*

When shakti in the form of vayu or pranic air is still and does not move swiftly in a specific direction, there develops in the middle, through the state of nirvikalpa, the form of Bhairava. (26)

*Kumbhita rechitaa vaapi pooritaa yaa yadaa bhavet;
Tadante shaantanaamaasau shaktyaa shaantah prakaashate.*

When kumbhaka takes place after pooraka or rechaka, then the shakti known as *shanta*, peace, is experienced and through that (the Bhairava consciousness) is revealed. (27)

Ajapa japa begins as a practice of pratyahara. The same practice becomes dharana when the focus of awareness goes to the subtle processes of consciousness associated with the breath and the space between breaths. One can concentrate on the breath in the nostrils, abdomen or in different parts of the body.

SHVASA DHARANA 2

Practice

Take some time to establish yourself in the asana and practise *kaya sthairyam*, stillness of body and mind.

Develop the experience of stillness within the body.

When the body is completely still and relaxed and the awareness is with the breath begin with shvasa dharana two.

First observe the natural breath as it flows in and out.

Now focus the awareness on the gap in between each breath.

Continue for some time.

Next, shift the awareness of the movement of breath to the frontal passage, between the heart and the nosetip.

While inhaling, witness the breath entering through the nostrils and moving downwards to the heart. While breathing out, the breath moves back up from the heart, *hridaya*, to *nasikagra*, the nosetip.

Continue for some time.

When this process becomes natural and effortless, focus the awareness on the turning point of each breath, first at the heart after completion of inhalation, and then at *nasikagra* after completion of exhalation.

Be aware of the space and peace experienced with this practice.

Now become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness. Be aware of the natural breath.

Take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the body. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings and externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there and chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Practise palming then gently open the eyes.

SHVASA DHARANA 3

This practice refers to *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (28–29):

*Aamoolaat kiranaabhaasaam sookshmaat
sookshmataraatmikaam;
Chintayettaam dvishatkaante shaamyanteem Bhairavodayah.*

Concentrate on the shakti arising from the root like the rays of the sun, gradually becoming subtler and subtler, until at last she dissolves in the *dvidashanta*, twice six (twelve) and Bhairava manifests. (28)

*Udgachchhanteem tadidroopaam pratichakram kramaat kramam;
Oordhvam mushtitrayam yaavat taavad ante mahodayah.*

(Meditate on that shakti) moving like lightning through all the chakras one by one, upwards through three fists (i.e. twelve fingers) to the twelfth. Then at last the glorious form of Bhairava dawns. (29)

The instruction given regarding the length of the breath is 12 finger widths. The number 12 is symbolic. Although there is an intricate system of chakras in the body, 12 are identified by *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* as major and minor chakras. In this context, the instruction does not just mean 12 finger widths that can be measured with the hand and extended to a certain point outside the nostrils; it also means that the breath moves from the first chakra, which is *kaamagra chakra*, situated in males at the tip of the penis and in females at the clitoris, to sahasrara at the top of the head.

Kaamagra is the first chakra from which breath awareness begins to ascend through the chakra system. After kaamagra chakra come mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, hrida and anahata, vishuddhi which relates to lalana. Then come the *kapala* chakras, the chakras in the skull: ajna, nasikagra, which also triggers mooladhara, manas and soma chakras, bindu visarga and finally sahasrara at the *brahmarandhra*, the crown of the head.

The esoteric sense of the term ‘twelve finger widths of breath’, indicates the movement of breath during inhalation from the kaamagra chakra right up to sahasrara, and during exhalation from sahasrara back down to kaamagra.

Practice

Take some time to establish yourself in the asana and practise kaya sthairyam; develop the experience of stillness within the body.

When the body is completely still and relaxed, and the awareness is with the breath begin shvasa dharana three.

Become aware of the spine.

The third stage of shvasa dharana is practised in the spinal passage, where the breath follows the chakras from kaamagra to sahasrara on inhalation and down from sahasrara to kaamagra on exhalation.

Inhale from kaamagra chakra, raise the breath through the psychic centres in turn: kaamagra, mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, nasikagra, manas, soma, bindu, to sahasrara or brahmarandhra. Then exhale from brahmarandhra, descend with the breath through bindu, soma, manas, nasikagra, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara, to kaamagra.

Continue for some time.

Now focus the awareness on the turning point of each breath, first at brahmarandhra after completion of inhalation, and then at kaamagra chakra after completion of exhalation.

Continue with this awareness for some time.

Now externalize carefully as before.

Be aware of the natural breath.

Take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the body. Be aware of the body in its meditation posture, the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings, externalize the awareness.
Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there and chant the mantra *Aum* three times.
Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes.
Gently open the eyes.

There is a natural gap in the breath at sahasrara and again at kaamagra for a fraction of a second before it turns back. The breath doesn't have to be stopped. The gap comes naturally just before the breath changes over. That fraction of a second is spontaneous *anta kumbhaka* and happens at the end of each breath.

The word *anta* means end, whereas the word *antar* refers to internal; antar is not meant here. Focusing on that *anta kumbhaka*, 'kumbhaka at the end' of each breath is the first dharana of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* to internalize perception and consciousness. The length of respiration can be gradually increased over a period of time. When this dharana is perfected, the respiration should extend for a distance of twelve finger widths.

One can do this practice and see how well one is able to hold the awareness during that gap of a fraction of a second. Ultimately, a separation takes place between breath and concentration. One begins with breath awareness, but then concentration is fixed on the *anta kumbhaka* between each breath. Concentration is held at that fraction of stillness, that moment of non-activity, while the breath continues to flow in its natural rhythm.

SHVASA DHARANA 4

Vijnana Bhairava Tantra (30) gives a hint on the practice of nada associated with this deepening awareness of the chakras:

*Kramadvaadashakam samyag dvaadashaaksharabheditam;
Sthoolasookshmaparasthityaa muktvaa muktvaantatah
Shivah.*

The twelve (centres) should be pierced successively through proper understanding of their (associated) twelve letters. Thus becoming liberated from the gross, then the subtle, one by one, at the end (of its journey) the kundalini becomes Shiva. (30)

Practice

Take some time to establish yourself in the asana and practise kaya sthairyam. Let the whole body relax and become still. Develop the experience of stillness within the body. Feel still and firm, rooted in the earth.

When the body is completely still and relaxed, and the awareness is with the breath begin with shvasa dharana four.

In this practice *varna* or vibratory sounds representing the 12 chakras are mentally repeated along with the rotation of the breath at the time of inhalation and exhalation.

As the breath ascends and descends, the sounds flow into one another in a continuum without break, so that they are not identified as individual varnas.

When a wind instrument is played, the sounds or notes flow and merge with each other without any break. The vowel sounds of the varnas are to be combined in the same way.

While inhaling ascend through the 12 psychic centres and be aware of the combined vowel sounds: *a – aa – i – ee – u – oo – e – ai – o – ou – am – ah.*

Then while exhaling, reverse the process and merge the sounds: *ah – am – ou – o – ai – e – oo – u – ee – i – aa – a.*

Continue for some time.

In this dharana, awareness of sound is continuously generated as the breath is rotated up and down the spinal passage.

Now become aware of the pauses between inhalation and exhalation, between exhalation and inhalation.

Concentration must be focused on the turning points of the breath at the end of each inhalation and exhalation. The two points of concentration are where the breath changes – that is the main focus of this dharana, not the breath rotation or the sound process.

Now externalize carefully as before. Become aware of the breath. Be aware of the body.

Have the attitude of a witness to all the sounds you hear.

Become aware of the time of day and your surroundings.

Take a slightly deeper breath and practise palming.

In this dharana as you rotate the awareness through the varna mala of the 12 chakras, many of the subtle conditionings that are created during the course of your own practice are broken.

The practice of *nadanusandhana*, discovering and exploring nada, is a major dharana described in *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*. This practice is only the beginning stage which later evolves into the discovery and experience of *nada*, the inherent vibration or sound.

SHVASA DHARANA 5

In *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (24–35) the process of shvasa dharana is described. It is said in verse 31:

*Tayaapooryaashu moordhaantam bhanktvaa
bhrookshepasetunaa;
Nirvikalpam manah kritvaa sarvordhve sarvagodgamah.*

Then, having filled the tip of *moordha* (a minor psychic centre located above the palate) and crossed the bridge between the eyebrows, the mind rises above all dichotomizing thought patterns and omnipresence (prevails). (31)

After the internalization of the mind, which takes place by following the first four stages and focusing on the subtle anta kumbhaka, the mantra *Soham* can be added during the breath rotation at the time of inhalation and exhalation. That is the fifth shvasa dharana.

Combined practice

Take a comfortable meditation posture that you can hold with the back and head straight, hands in a mudra, and the eyes gently closed.

Take some time to adjust the body comfortably. Check the whole body, releasing any points of tension and making any necessary adjustment.

Practise *kaya sthairyam*, making the whole body still.

Take a resolve to let the whole body remain still throughout the practice.

See the body, as though in a full length mirror, no movement.

Feel the whole body, steady and firm like a tree rooted in the ground.

The physical body is so still that you can clearly feel the breath moving inside.

Be aware of the natural breath.

Now the practice of combining all five stages of shvasa dharana begins.

Observe the natural breath, without altering it.

While watching the breath, imagine you are drawing the air in from an external point about 10 cm away from the nosetip, and follow its movement through the respiratory passages. At the time of exhalation, the breath turns and flows back out to the same external point.

At the turning point between inhalation and exhalation, become aware of the gap when the breath stops for a fraction of a second before it turns back.

Focus your concentration on that fraction-of-a-second gap.

Do not try to hold the breath intentionally.

Be aware of that fraction of a second, concentrate only on that point of inaction.

Experience the emptiness, the *shoonya*, of that point where there is no movement of thought or breath.

Relax without disturbing yourself, just rest from the practice for a few breaths.

Now, shift the awareness of the movement of breath to the frontal passage, between the heart, *hridaya*, and the nosetip, *nasikagra*.

While inhaling, witness the breath entering through the nostrils and moving downwards to the heart. While breathing out, the breath moves back up from the heart to the nosetip.

Continue observing the breath between the heart and the nosetip for some time.

When this process becomes natural and effortless, focus the awareness on the turning point of each breath, first at the heart after completion of inhalation, and then at the nosetip after completion of exhalation.

Relax without disturbing yourself, just rest from the practice for a few breaths.

Now, shift the awareness of the breath to the spinal passage.

Inhale from kaamagra chakra and raise the breath through the psychic centres in turn: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, nasikagra, manas, soma, bindu, sahasrara. Then exhale from sahasrara (from the brahmarandhra) and descend with the breath through bindu, soma, manas, nasikagra, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata and hrida, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara, to kaamagra.

After some time, when steady in the practice, focus the awareness on the turning point of each breath, first in sahasrara at the brahmarandhra after the completion of inhalation, and then at kaamagra chakra after completion of exhalation.

Now, add the mental repetition of the Sanskrit vowel sounds along with the rotation of the breath.

While inhaling ascend through the twelve psychic centres and be aware of the combined vowel sounds: *a – aa – i – ee – u – oo – e – ai – o – ou – am – ah*. While exhaling, reverse the process and merge the sounds: *ah – am – ou – o – ai – e – oo – u – ee – i – aa – a*.

Let the sounds flow into each other, like a continuum.

Continue with this awareness of the varna sounds for some time on each inhalation and exhalation.

Now focus your awareness on the turning points of the breath at the end of each inhalation and exhalation. These two points of concentration are the main focus of this dharana, not the breath rotation or the sound process.

Continue with this awareness for some time.

Now, let go of varna, the vowel sounds.

Keep breathing from kaamagra to brahmarandhra and add awareness of the mantra *So Ham* to the breath rotation.

Mentally hear the mantra *So* with inhalation, as the breath moves up to brahmarandhra, and the mantra *Ham* on the out-breath when the breath moves down to kaamagra. Focus the awareness on the turning point of each breath. Develop the awareness of the turning points. Develop the awareness of the quality of experience at these turning points.

Now become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness – not the turning points but the breath itself.

Take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the body. Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the surroundings: of sounds around you, of the room you are in.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eye



5

Cause of Bondage

The next practice of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is *shoonya dharana*. The yogi meditates in the heart on the five voids or states of *shoonya panchaka*, which appear in circles, often represented by the eye of a peacock feather. The *dharana* begins with meditation on the five *tanmatras*, the subtle sources of the five senses: hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. However, before taking up this *dharana*, the significance and role of the *tanmatra* in relation to one's individual evolution must be understood. In order to understand the role of *tanmatra*, one must first know the sequence of their development. This becomes a philosophical matter, as it involves the theory of creation from the unmanifest to the manifest dimension.

Evolution from prakriti to ahamkara

The story of creation starts with two principles: *purusha* representing consciousness and *prakriti* representing *kriya*, action, energy and movement. When one thinks of fire, one realizes that heat and light are from one and the same source, but luminosity is identified as separate from warmth. In the same manner, *purusha* is identified as consciousness and *prakriti* as the creative aspect of that consciousness.

From the union of the two, *mahat* is born, as *prakriti*'s first evolute of consciousness and energy. *Mahat* is also known as *buddhi*, the consciousness of the manifest and unmanifest

universe. It is something like the unified field theory of tantra and yoga. When the individual consciousness is transferred from the body to the cosmos, it becomes mahat.

The next evolute from mahat is *ahamkara*, which is not just the ego principle that one experiences in life, but the realization of 'I' as a unit. When God thought to Himself '*Ekoham* – I am One', it indicated some contained form, because the idea of 'one' is not a universal idea, it means this 'one' exists at some point in time and space, otherwise there would be 'no-one'. The identity of 'one', the singular identity, is the evolute from mahat into *ahamkara*.

This is an important concept, because duality, *dvaita*, finishes and unity, *advaita*, begins when the myriad forms merge into one. The beginning of *advaita*, or dissolution of *dvaita*, is identifying that 'I am one with God – God is in me, and I am in God'. That is the beginning of the process, which leads to dissolution, where I lose myself. The 'I' is lost, and that 'I' is *ahamkara*.

Ahamkara and the evolutionary role of the three gunas

Samkhya philosophy explains that prakriti herself is made up of the three gunas, but it is after *ahamkara* emerges that the gunas become manifest. From *ahamkara*, the three gunas become manifest: *sattwa*, luminosity, *rajas*, action and *tamas*, stability.

Tamas is not a negative quality but the first condition to evolve from the state of *ahamkara*. Tamas is the condition of existence from where further evolution becomes possible. Without *tamas* there cannot be further evolution. The condition of *tamas*, which is responsible for further growth, gives birth to *rajas*. Tamas is the soil around *rajas*, because soil is the basis in which any kind of growth takes place. One can plant a seed in soil and it will grow. Tamas is the soil in which prakriti lays the foundation of life. Before constructing a building, one must first make a foundation. In this way, *tamas* is the basic foundation or condition of life.

From the foundation of *tamas* comes the possibility of further creation, growth and development. However, it

requires the interaction of another attribute, which is the process of *rajas*. Bringing the hands together to make a clapping sound is *rajas* or *kriya*. An inner response to events, the expression of a thought, feeling, emotion or desire, which comes up because of some association is *kriya*, or *rajas*. If the association were not there, the thought or feeling would not be generated. That is the process of *rajas* – two coming together to create something else.

The third *guna* is *sattwa*, the luminous nature inherent in creation. Evolution from transcendental to gross is a movement from one to many. Evolution from gross to transcendental is from many back to one. *Sattwa* contains both possibilities. According to yoga, ultimately one has to identify with *sattwa*, because the return to one's original luminous state is only possible when one reaches that stage of *sattwa*.

In the process of creation or manifestation, on the other hand, the interaction of *sattwa* is necessary for the continuation of the evolutionary process. From *ahamkara* *rajas* stimulates further evolutes. The *jnanendriyas* and *manas* evolve from *sattwa*'s intervention with *rajas*. And on account of the intervention of *tamas* with *rajas*, the *tanmatras* arise.

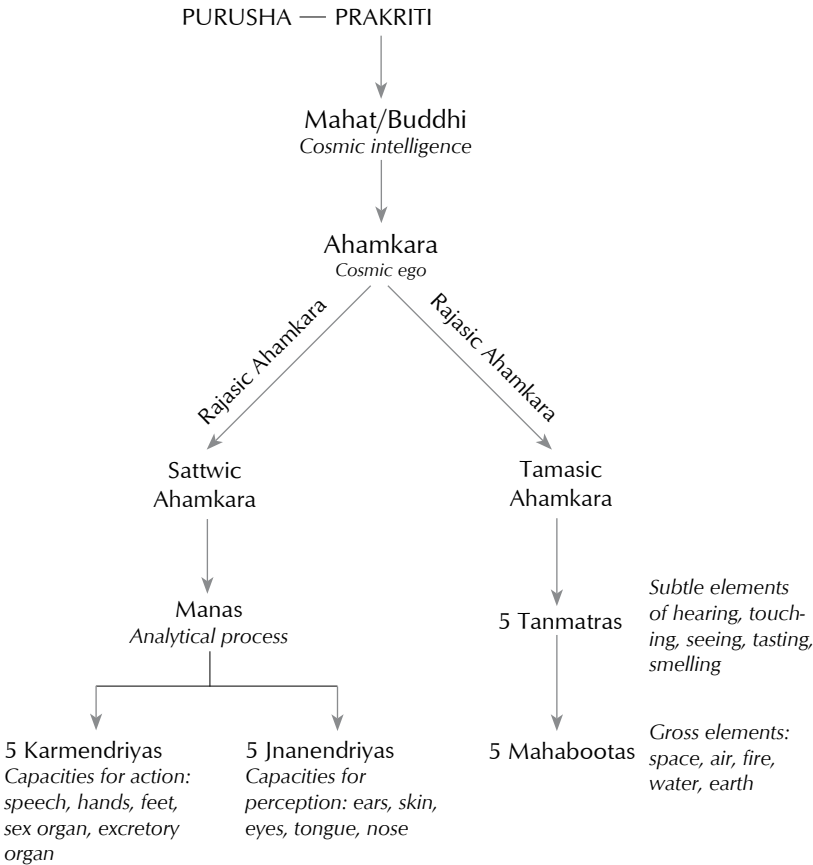
Manas, indriyas, tanmatras and bhootas

The *tanmatras* are the subtle senses of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling, which correspond to the *jnanendriyas* or sense organs: ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. They feed information to *manas*, the rational mind. From the *tanmatras* arise the last evolutes, the *mahabhootas* or *tattwas*, which are the five elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth, comprising all material form. The physical body is nothing but the permutation and combination of these five elements. The *tanmatras* are the subtle essence of these elements, which evolve from *ahamkara* due to the intervention of *rajas* with *tamas*.

In the diagram, *purusha* and *prakriti* are at the top. From there, the next level down is *mahat*. From *mahat*, the next level down is *ahamkara*. From *ahamkara*, arrows are pointing down because the influence of *rajas* on *ahamkara*

stimulates further evolutes. The combination of rajas with tamas gives rise to one series of evolutes and experiences, and the combination of rajas with sattwa gives rise to a different series of evolutes and experiences. Although the combination of rajas with tamas gives birth to the subtle elements, and the combination of rajas with sattwa gives birth to the indriyas and mind, they are horizontally connected.

25 Evolutes in Manifestation



From the combination of rajas and sattwa the mind and indriyas evolve. The indriyas include the *jnanendriyas* that work to give information about the dimension of the manifest creation, and motor organs, *karmendriyas*, through which one interacts with the world: vocal cords, hands, feet, genitals and anus.

On the other side of the diagram are the subtle principles or tanmatras, which are the essence of the five mahabhootas (tattwas), the gross principles which also arise from the association of rajas with tamas. The tanmatras of hearing relates to sound and space, then comes touch and air, vision and fire, taste and water, smell and earth. In this way, the *pancha mahabhootas*, or five great elements, have evolved from the five tanmatras.

The word *bhoota* means spirit, and the spirit or quality contained in the pancha mahabhootas is the subtle essence or the tanmatras. Each tanmatra is associated with one bhoota and one chakra. It can be said the bhoota of mooladhara is earth, and smell is the tanmatra of earth. Similarly, water is the bhoota of swadhisthana and the tanmatra of water is taste; fire is the bhoota of manipura and the tanmatra is vision; air is the bhoota of anahata and the tanmatra is touch; and space is the bhoota of vishuddhi and the tanmatra is hearing. In this way, the tanmatra is the quality inherent in each element, and they represent the subtle foundation without which the indriyas would be unable to exist or function.

Bondage

The real cause of bondage is actually the association between the indriyas, tanmatras and mahabhootas. One may enjoy the beauty, softness and smell of flowers, but it is the permutation of mahabhootas or elements contained in the flower that actually attracts one. A particular jnanendriya is attracted towards a particular object, and a particular karmendriya comes into play. The perception, may be through smell or sight, which attracts the nose or eyes, and a relationship develops between a particular jnanendriya and a particular tanmatra.

The mind also comes into the picture, as it is known as the sixth sense. It is an overall sensory organ that perceives the sensory objects whether present or not. It can see, hear, feel, taste or smell without the presence of an external object. This is the quality of the mind.

However, mind and senses are bound by their relationship with the tanmatras and bhootas. It is the ultimate cause of bondage, and whatever sadhana one does, the aim is to gain the ability to disassociate the jnanendriyas and the mind on the one hand, from the tanmatras and bhootas on the other. The process of disassociation marks the beginning of one's spiritual evolution. Disassociation of the mind from the senses, sensory perceptions and sensory objects is the starting point of the meditative process.

Observation and disassociation

The association of the tanmatras with the indriyas is the cause of bondage because they provide the mind with experiences which in turn produce mental conditioning. They also create *asakti*, attachment, due to *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion. This is where the life story begins. One has been subject to raga, dvesha and asakti from the time of birth, and one will remain in a state of bondage as long as one is subject to them. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali (2:7–8) it is said:

*Sukhaanushayee raagah
Duhkhaanushayee dveshah.*

Attraction accompanying pleasure is raga.

Repulsion accompanying pain is dvesha.

One is repelled by what is not pleasurable because one is seeking pleasure. Asakti is the string of attachment to, or identification with, the object of pleasure.

Anything that is beautiful, likeable and desirable creates asakti. Attachment begins with a desire. One wants to have a nice car, nice husband or wife, nice home, nice interior, nice exterior, nice clothes and so on. Whatever one desires for the

sake of pleasure creates asakti. From asakti come the *vrittis*, modifications, from the *vrittis* comes mental conditioning, and from conditioning comes bondage.

In order to be free from bondage, the source of mental conditioning and *vrittis* has to be cut off by separation of the senses from the sensory perceptions and from the mahabhootas which compose the objects. For this reason, the tantric and yogic traditions have emphasized observation of the experience and disassociation.

This process of observation and disassociation allows one to gradually reduce desires and attachments in life. Somebody once asked Swami Satyananda, "How do we know if we are evolving in spiritual life?" He said, "Well, there are no milestones to indicate that you have travelled three miles, thirty miles or one hundred miles and have to journey another five hundred or one thousand miles. The only indication is that desires, attachments and cravings become less, and you become more content, satisfied and fulfilled in the present situation."

This reduction of desires and cravings indicates the separation of the indriyas from the cause of attraction, the tanmatras, or the sensory experience. One purpose of shoonya panchaka dharana is to become aware of the association of indriyas and tanmatras, and to come to a state of passivity.

Can you separate your awareness from the sensation of touch? You cannot right now but that is the next step which you have to attain. That is the first shoonyata. Can you separate the awareness of the sensation of taste from the experience of taste? That is the second shoonyata. Can you separate the sensation of sound from the ability to hear? That is the third shoonyata. Can you separate vision from sight? That is the fourth shoonyata. Can you separate smell from the nose? You have to, and that is the fifth shoonyata. This practice begins with a basic shoonya meditation, and later the various sensations are gradually isolated.

6

Shoonya Panchaka Dharanas 1–3

V*ijnana Bhairava Tantra* contains a beautiful sequence of practices. In the first dharana series, concentration is practised on the gap between breaths – which is a physical activity. When one becomes aware of the gap between inhalation and exhalation, one uses that physical activity to internalize the mind and perception, and to observe the subtle processes that take place within. When awareness is focused on this subtle process in the body, the senses become still. This is a necessary step because the senses create the major disturbance in any form of practice.

Sixteen mental states

There are five senses, and for most people the most active sensory experience is visual. The next most active is auditory. When the visual sense is engaged, the brain becomes fully active. When the eyes are open and information is received about the objects in the world, the brain is activated and there are beta waves. That level of activity corresponds to the concept of *jagrat avastha* in yoga, the waking state, where recognition of the world of name, form and idea takes place.

The moment the eyes are closed, visual inputs are cut off and the brain moves into a state of partial passivity because there are no visual stimuli to activate or agitate it. When the brain goes into this state of passivity, alpha waves begin to manifest, even in the wakeful state. The act of closing the

eyes does not mean that one moves from jagrat to *sushupti* or *nidra*, sleep. The act of closing the eyes simply cuts off impressions that are received through the sense of sight, but this does have significant effects.

Therefore, in the Tantras, 16 states of mind have been classified, not just the four states of *jagrat*, conscious, *swapna*, subconscious, *sushupti*, unconscious and *turiya*, superconscious. In *jagrat* there are four divisions: *jagrat-jagrat*, *jagrat-swapna*, *jagrat-nidra* and *jagrat-turiya*. In *swapna* there are four divisions: *swapna-jagrat*, *swapna-swapna*, *swapna-nidra* and *swapna-turiya*. In *nidra* there are four divisions: *nidra-jagrat*, *nidra-swapna*, *nidra-nidra* and *nidra-turiya*. In *turiya* there are also four divisions: *turiya-jagrat*, *turiya-swapna*, *turiya-nidra* and *turiya-turiya*.

The range/extent of dharana

In the *dharana* practices, one moves from the state of *jagrat-jagrat* to *jagrat-swapna*, to *jagrat-nidra* and to *jagrat-turiya*. This is the gradual movement of *dharana*. *Dharana* practices do not take one directly from *jagrat* to *swapna* to *nidra* to *turiya*, but they move through the various states.

Therefore, in *dharana* the practices are aimed at gradually developing the deeper levels of conscious awareness. When one is aware of the movement of breath, the awareness of that activity is *jagrat-jagrat*. However, when one becomes aware of the gap between breaths, the awareness intensifies and the level of that experience is the state of *jagrat-swapna*.

Therefore, in *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, the first sequence of *dharanas* emphasizes awareness on the gap between the breaths in order to establish awareness in *jagrat-swapna*, which is necessary before one can enter *jagrat-nidra* or *jagrat-turiya*.

In the last stage of the breath sequence, where mantra is used and the vibration or *spandan* of the mantra fills the gap between inhalation and exhalation, one comes to the point of *jagrat-turiya*. When *spandan* is experienced in that gap, the mantra ceases to be a sound form, which is identified as *So* or *Ham*. It remains only as *spandan*, vibration.



It is said in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (32–33):

*Shikhipakshaish chitraroopair mandalaih shoonyapanchakam;
Dhyaayato' nuttare shoonye pravesho hridaye bhavet.*

Like the five different coloured circles on the peacock's feathers, one should meditate on the five voids. Then by following them to the end, which becomes the principle void, enter the heart. (32)

*Eedrishena kramenaiva yatra kutraapi chintanaa;
Shoonye kudye pare paatre svayam leenaa varapradaa.*

In this way, wherever there is mindful awareness, either on the void, or on another object such as a wall, or on an excellent person such as guru, gradually the boon of absorption into the self is granted. (33)

In the practice of shoonya panchaka there are five states of shoonya. One moves progressively through subtler states of experience towards recognition of one's essential nature.

SHOONYA DHARANA I: ANNAMAYA SHOONYATA

The first dharana involves awareness of *annamaya kosha*, the physical body. Normally, when one is aware of the body, one feels its solid nature. The body's weight and its parts are a physical identification, but the mind is aware of every process happening inside the body as well, whether consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously. Consciously one is aware of the world outside, involved in the activities of the world, but unconsciously the mind is scanning the inner body as well.

Consciously the mind scans the outer world like a radar, and unconsciously it scans the inner body. When an imbalance occurs in the inner body, the unconscious scanning suddenly becomes conscious and one begins to feel some physical problem. The awareness of an internal experience is the result of the unconscious scanning becoming conscious. In shoonya meditation, the scanning of the inner body as well as the external scanning that happens naturally at the conscious level has to be stopped. Awareness has to be disassociated or disconnected from physical and mental activities.

Therefore, in the initial stages of shoonya meditation, the first affirmation is, "I am not this body, nor am I the experiences related to the body." When one says it, the *drashta* or witness aspect awakens and says, "No, I am aloof from all this. I am not the pain in the muscles or joints that my body is feeling. I am not that uncomfortable feeling, which is experienced by my inner organs." Disconnection has to take place from the physical state.

Practice

Sit in a comfortable meditation posture.

Release any pressure, tightness, or tension that you may feel, so that the body is free from any physical distraction. The body should be in a state of absolute ease. Sit in any comfortable posture, but be sure that you do not sleep.

Place the hands in a mudra on the knees or in front.

After adjusting your position, gently close your eyes.

Observe the whole body internally. Observe each and every part of the body internally.

Now bring your attention to *hridayakasha*, the space of the heart, and focus on anahata chakra.

Become aware of anahata, in the region of the heart. With the awareness fixed in *hridayakasha* develop the experience of stillness. Nothing exists around or within you except physical stillness and mental tranquillity.

Develop the experience of silence and stillness in the body. Allow your awareness to roam freely in the space of the body.

Say to yourself mentally, “I am not this body.” Identify and deepen the awareness of space, and see the whole body filled with space.

Intensify the experience of space within the body.

Now become aware again of the solidity of the body. Be aware of the warmth and vibration of the body. Be aware of the spine as the central support of the body. Be aware of the flow of the natural breath inside the body.

Be aware of the surroundings, the place and the people around you. Focus at the eyebrow centre on a flame of light. Breathe in deeply for *Aum* chanting.

The first dharana involves the awareness of annamaya kosha, the physical body, and disconnection of the awareness from the annamaya kosha experiences. This is the most difficult step to achieve due to the sensory connections between annamaya, and the mental body, *manomaya kosha* and the energy body, *pranamaya kosha*. Although the practice sounds simple, only thinking, “I am not this body, nor the experiences of the body,” is not enough – it is difficult to achieve annamaya shoonya. It is said in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (46–48):

*Tanoodeshe shoonyataiva kshanamaatram vibhaavayet;
Nirvikalpam nirvikalpo nirvikalpasvaroopabhaak.*

If one concentrates on the body as a void, even for a moment, with the mind free from thought, then one attains thoughtlessness and verily becomes that form of void. (46)

*Sarvam dehagatam dravyam viyadvyaaptam mrigekshane;
Vibhaavayet tatas tasya bhaavanaa saa sthira bhavet.*

O gazelle-eyed one, concentrate upon all the constituents of the body pervaded by space, so that the thought becomes steady. (47)

*Dehaantare tvagvibhaagam bhittibhootam vichintayet;
Na kinchid antare tasya dhyayaan na dhyeyabhaag bhavet.*

One should contemplate on the skin of the body as a mere wall or partition with nothing inside it. By meditating thus, one becomes like the void, which cannot be meditated upon. (48)

Even in deep states of meditation, if a mosquito bites the body, one will feel the prick. That feeling cannot be ignored despite all one's efforts. And it is not only mosquito bites that draw one's attention. If the body is cold, there will be awareness of the sensation of cold, and even in the deepest levels of sensory isolation it will create a state of discomfort in the body. Similarly, excess heat will create a state of discomfort in the body, and the moment that discomfort is felt, body identification takes place and shoonyata stops. The perfection of this practice is difficult but has excellent results.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:18) Lord Krishna describes the state of shoonyata:

*Samah shatrau cha mitre cha tathaa maanaapamaanayoh
Sheetoshnasukhadukheshu samah sangavivarjitah.*

One who is the same to foe or friend, and also in honour and dishonour,
Who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, is free from attachment.

In this sloka it is said that one remains unaffected by cold and heat, *sheeta* and *ushna*, which are physical, and by pleasure and pain, *sukha* and *dukha*, which are mental, because the identification is cut, *samah sangavivarjitah*. Lord Krishna is not only referring to the ideal state of an individual's experience in philosophical terms, but to the state of annamaya shoonya dharana.



SHOONYA DHARANA 2: MANOMAYA SHOONYATA

In yogic literature one often hears the terms ‘lower mind’ and ‘higher mind’. To keep things simple, it can be said that the manomaya kosha represents the lower mind and includes the senses and *manas*, the rational mind and some aspects of memory and discrimination. The vijñanamaya kosha represents the higher mind and is not dependent on external senses. It has much finer discrimination of what is real and what is unreal.

Practising shoonya on manomaya kosha proceeds through separating awareness from each of the five senses. In the process of manomaya shoonyata one first becomes aware of the process of sensory perception and then detaches oneself from it. One becomes aware of oneself witnessing it, unattached to the object or the experience. Then there is an affirmation, “I am not the mind, nor the experiences related to the mind.”

In deeper aspects of the practice one realizes that sensory constructs, thought constructs, emotional constructs and intellectual constructs do not make up one’s inner personality. The word ‘constructs’ is used because they are made from components – but it is not known how they are constructed inside. Thought is one activity, but within each thought are many different thought constructs. Within each emotion that one experiences, there are so many un-experienced emotions as well, which are the emotional constructs.

One perceives a building, but the building is constructed of many elements, like bricks and mortar, which are different but together construct a building. Similarly, a thought, which one experiences in the mind, is composed of many different elements put together. The emotion or feeling that one experiences is constructed of many elements coming together in the form of a feeling. When one affirms to oneself, “I am not this mind, nor am I the experiences associated with the mind,” one awakens the state of awareness within. One becomes the drashta and begins to observe the

thought constructs and inner constructs without identifying or associating with them.

Practice

Get ready for the practice of manomaya shooniyata.

Take a comfortable meditation posture that you can hold with the back and head straight, hands in a mudra, and the eyes gently closed.

Check the whole body, releasing any points of tension and making any necessary adjustment.

Practise *kaya sthairyam*, making the whole body still.

Feel the whole body, steady and firm.

Become aware of all the sounds that you can hear. Be aware of the experience of the sound in the sense organ – the ears. Be aware that you are separate from the sound. Repeat the sankalpa “I am not this mind. I am not the senses or the experience of the senses.”

Become aware of all the experiences of touch that you can feel. Be aware of the cause of the sensation – the clothes, the ground, different objects, and the sense organ – the skin. Be aware that you are separate from the sense of touch. Repeat the sankalpa “I am not this mind. I am not the senses or the experience of the senses.”

Become aware of all the smells that you can perceive. Be aware of the experience of smell in the sense organ – the nose. Be aware that you are separate from the sense of smell. Repeat the sankalpa “I am not this mind. I am not the senses or the experience of the senses.”

Become aware of all the tastes that you can perceive. Be aware of the different tastes in the mouth, experience taste in the sense organ – the tongue. Be aware that you are separate, witnessing the tastes. Repeat the sankalpa “I am not this mind. I am not the senses or the experience of the senses.”

Become aware of anything you can see behind your closed eyes. Be aware of the cause of the sensations – different

lights shining from outside, moving objects. Be aware that you are separate from the sense of sight. Repeat the sankalpa “I am not this mind. I am not the senses or the experience of the senses.”

Be aware of any thoughts or feelings that come to mind. Simply witness any sensations. Repeat the sankalpa “I am not the mind, nor the experiences related to the mind. I am the witness.”

Now become ready to end the practice.

Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness.

Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body. Become aware of the surroundings, externalize the awareness.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a point of light there and chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eyes.



SHOONYA DHARANA 3: PRANAMAYA SHOONYATA

The next stage of shoonya dharana takes place at the level of pranamaya kosha, as pranas infuse the senses with energy and activity – they empower the senses. This shoonya is achieved by regulating the solar and lunar energies of *pingala* and *ida nadis*, and bringing them together in *sushumna*, the central nadi. Some components of kundalini yoga need to be perfected for this level of shoonya.

Ida, pingala and sushumna nadis are the three main conductors of the flow of energy or prana shakti. The word *nadi* is derived from *nadya* which means stream. The word nadi also means river because it comes from this word nadya. Nadis are streams of energy called *shakti* or *prana*, and the major flows move along the pathways where the chakras are located. In physical terms these major pathways are located in the spinal cord and the nadis are associated with the nervous system because of their physical attributes. The motor nervous system is compared to pingala, the sensory nervous system to ida, and the autonomic nervous system to sushumna.

One can use these comparisons in the beginning to develop a better understanding and perception of the pranic experiences, but when one comes to the practice of dharana, the nadis must be visualized as particles or streams of light moving along specific pathways. Just as one sees particles of light, floating in *chidakasha*, the mental space, the same particles, moving together in close proximity along one path, become a nadi.

In dharana, nadis are not visualized as flows of breath, mind or consciousness, but as flows of light. These nadis are located in the pranamaya kosha and not in the annamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya or anandamaya koshas. They are attributes of the pranic body.

At specific places in the pranic body the major nadis come together and form a confluence known as a *chakra* or psychic energy centre. The ida and pingala nadis criss-cross each other at each chakra junction as they ascend the spinal

pathway. The major chakras: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna and sahasrara, are visualized as they each form a confluence where these streams of light come together.

In the minor chakras there is not such a confluence because the minor chakras act as switches. If one wants to turn on a light, the switch is always fixed somewhere separate to the actual light bulb. The minor chakras act as switches, but the major chakras are where the confluence of ida, pingala and sushumna take place. Each confluence known as a *chakra* is a circle or vortex of light, forming an energy field.

When two channels of water meet at one place, there will be agitation and some water may spill over the banks. Whenever two flows come together, one flow will always be a little diverted. The obstruction of the normal flow of energy is known as a chakra. After the energy passes through the obstruction, the channel becomes clear and flows again until the next point of confluence, where it is again obstructed. This is how the nadis flow up the spinal pathway, converging at each chakra junction.

Pranamaya shoonyata

During the practice of pranamaya shoonyata, the awareness is initially focused on the physical body, which acts as the switch to illuminate the pranic body. Although at first one places the nadis and chakras in the physical body, the intensity of concentration and clarity of visualization actually activate the pranic body.

Concentration through visualization has been emphasized in yoga. One is always told ‘to visualize’, rather than ‘to imagine’. Imagination and visualization are different. Visualization means to give a visual form to an experience, which can be perceived by the mind. Imagination does not need a visual component, but visualization does. ‘Imagine’ can imply summoning a familiar sound, touch, taste or smell, but the word ‘visualize’ is used because for most people the visual component works best as an aspect of drashta.

In this practice, awareness follows the pathway of the chakras, using pingala nadi. Pingala emerges from the right side of mooladhara, curves and crosses swadhisthana at the coccyx. From swadhisthana, pingala curves to the left and crosses manipura behind the navel. From manipura, pingala curves to the right and crosses anahata behind the heart. From anahata, pingala curves to the left and crosses vishuddhi behind the throat pit. From vishuddhi, pingala curves to the right to come to ajna. The pathway begins at the right and ends at the right.

The ascending path or *arohan* follows pingala and starts from the right side, but the descending path or *avarohan* follows ida and starts from the left side. From ajna, ida curves to the left and crosses vishuddhi. From vishuddhi, ida curves to the right and crosses anahata. From anahata ida curves to the left and crosses manipura. From manipura, ida curves to the right and crosses swadhisthana, and from swadhisthana, ida curves to the left and comes to mooladhara. This completes the whole circuit.

The awareness ascends through the path of pingala or prana shakti, and at this time one must visualize the movement of the sun. In time-lapse photography one can see the sun moving from one side of the horizon to the other. In the same manner, one has to visualize the sun moving from right to left, left to right and so on, up to ajna. From ajna the awareness descends through the path of ida. The movement of the moon is visualized from left to right, right to left, back down to mooladhara. During the rotation, one has to focus on the visualization of the sun and moon and try to see them.

The movement is also coordinated with the breath, so that in one inhalation one is able to move the sun or *surya* from mooladhara to ajna, and in one exhalation one is able to move the moon or *chandra* from ajna to mooladhara. However, in the beginning, if one finds it difficult to move with the breath, one should continue to breathe normally and focus on the upward movement of surya and the downward movement of chandra through the chakras.

Deepening pranamaya shoonyata

It is said in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (41–42):

*Tantryaadivaadyashabdeshu deergheshu kramasamsthiteh;
Ananyachetaah pratyante paravyomavapur bhavet.*

When one-pointed awareness on the prolonged inner sounds of different musical instruments, such as stringed, wind and percussion, is gradually established, in the end the body becomes the supreme space. (41)

*Pindamantrasya sarvasya sthoolavarnakramena tu;
Ardhendubindumaadaantah shoonyochaaraad bhavech-chhivah.*

By repetition of all the gross letters of the bija mantras successively, including the bindu ‘M’, (and meditating thus) on the void within each sound, one verily becomes Shiva. (42)

Four different sequences can be used to develop the awareness of pranamaya kosha and its relationship with nada.

Practice

First, kaya sthairyam is practised for some time until one is free from internal distraction or sensory disturbances and becomes aware of the breath.

The major chakras of the spine from mooladhara to ajna are seen as points of light.

While ascending through pingala nadi accompanied by the image of the sun, and descending through ida nadi accompanied by the image of the moon, one listens to the slow, long extended notes of the musical scale: sa – re – ga – ma – pa – dha. As the musical notes of the scale are played, one has to listen carefully and follow the sound of the notes up through the chakras.

The sound vibration from the start of one note to the start of the next creates the movement. Each note indicates the movement from one chakra to the next.

Afterwards, the musical notes stop and for the second sequence, maintaining *kaya sthairyam* and one's awareness flowing up, *arohan*, and down, *avarohan*, the nadis, one simply counts the major chakras: 1, mooladhara-*sa*, 2, swadhisthana-*re*, 3, manipura-*ga*, 4, anahata-*ma*, 5, vishuddhi-*pa* and 6, ajna-*dha*. Then one counts in reverse order back down from ajna to mooladhara.

Next, the numbers stop, and for the third sequence one hears a tapping sound six times. The awareness continues to flow up and down along pingala and ida nadis but one can intensify the practice of moving energy along the solar and the lunar routes by tapping.

Finally, even that sound stops, and one carries on in silence.



7

Awakening of Sushumna

From the awareness of nothingness inside the shell of the body, one experiences the chakras. From annamaya kosha, one moves into the experience of manomaya kosha and the deeper experience of pranamaya kosha with the visualization of sun and moon in pingala and ida nadis. Ida and pingala nadis represent the realm of duality in which one can explore further the realms of jagrat avastha, but once sushumna nadi opens, one begins to be aware of a new perspective.

In the next stage, awareness of sushumna is developed. *Sushumna*, the major nadi, is the dormant energy channel directly associated with the energy known as kundalini. According to the tantric and yogic traditions, when the ida and pingala channels are freed from blockages or *vikara*, there is a spontaneous movement, ida and pingala flow together and there is harmony between sun and moon – that is the sushumna experience. The path from ajna to sahasrara is straight, because division and duality stop at ajna. The three flows of ida, pingala and sushumna which were separate up to this point become one and lead to sahasrara. It is said in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (34–35):

*Kapaalaantarmano nyasya tishthan meelitalochanah;
Kramena manaso daardhyaat lakshayet lakshyam uttamam.*

Having closed the eyes, fixing the attention at the crown of the head, gradually stabilize the mind and direct it

towards the highest goal, which will gradually become discernible. (34)

*Madhyanaadee madhyasamsthaa bisasootraabharoopayaa;
Dhyaataantarvyomayaa devyaa tayaa devah prakaashate.*

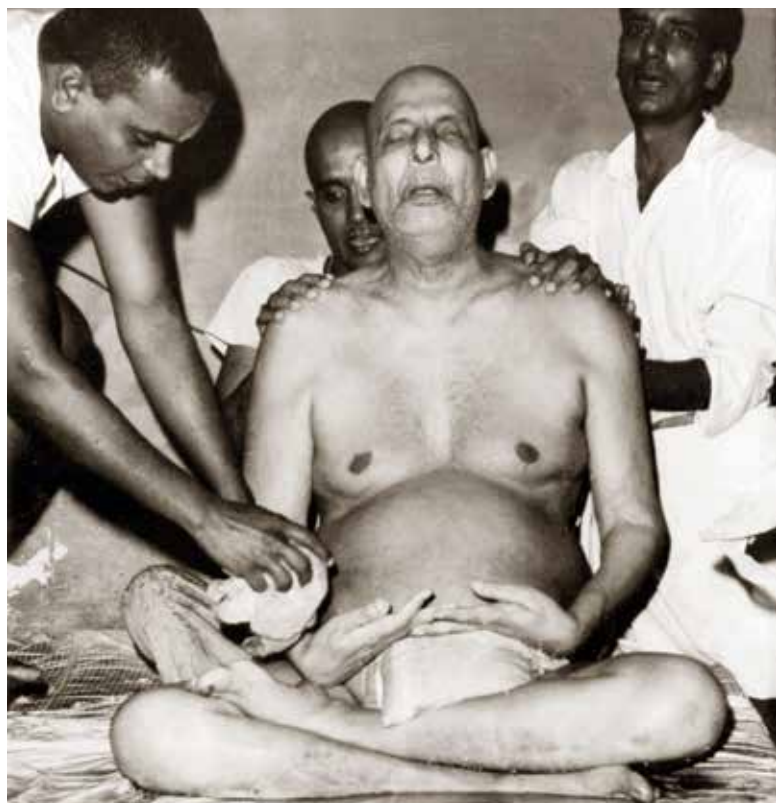
One should meditate on the inner space of the medial nadi (sushumna) situated in the central axis of the body (the spinal column), which is as slender as a fibre of the lotus stem, and then by the grace of Devi, the divine [form] is revealed. (35)

Pathway of kundalini

Sushumna is said to be a dormant force, because it only flows when there is a balance of sun and moon. At the physical level, sushumna is the flow of both nostrils together. During the process of pranayama, when both nostrils flow equally and evenly, the flow is known as sushumna. If the flow of breath in both nostrils is not equal, sushumna remains dormant.

This principle also applies to the dharana practice. The balance of the solar and lunar energies gives rise to a third energy, the transcendental energy. The third energy becomes the catalyst for the awakening of kundalini shakti. Neither the flow of pingala nor the flow of ida can awaken kundalini. Only when these two forces flow together and create a third force is kundalini awakened. *Kundalini* does not represent prana shakti, the vital force, or chitta shakti, the mental force – it is a third, transcendental force. Kundalini is beyond annamaya, manomaya and the other koshas.

Kundalini is a non-physical, non-material force. It is not even a mental or psychic force. It is the transcendental force. The reversal of the outward flowing consciousness and energy and its return to the source is the arousal of kundalini shakti. No meditation process is complete or perfect until kundalini arises. Stillness of mind alone does not indicate *dhyana*, meditation. The awakening of the transcendental force within represents the beginning of dhyana. In the state



of dhyana the mental, pranic and material constructs are eliminated. The body becomes light and the experience of light can dissolve and take away any form.

When Swami Sivananda attained mahasamadhi, his physical body, although devoid of life force, became so light that it started to levitate off the floor and the devotees who were attending him had to hold it down. Swami Sivananda was not a small man. He was over six feet tall, a giant among men in every sense of the word, physical, mental and spiritual. At the time of death, however, his physical body became luminous and began to rise up. It seemed as if his body had some internal magnetic attraction, because the cloth on which he was seated also stuck to his body as it rose.

There are photos of the cloth actually being pulled up by his body. Finally, his attendants had to place rocks on his body, in order to hold it down.

Although this may sound like a miracle or the ultimate siddhi, Swami Sivananda had already attained mahasamadhi when it occurred, so where was the siddhi coming from? *Siddhis* are an expression of psychic power and they only manifest when someone makes the effort to project them, but what happened at the mahasamadhi of Swami Sivananda was different. His soul merged with every atom of the body. Spirit became one with matter and when that happened, even matter took the form of luminosity. That is the highest state of kundalini awakening.

Shuddha and ashuddha tattwas

The awakening of kundalini is a result of sushumna flowing, because sushumna is the flow of pure energy. It is not the energy which is coloured by either prana shakti or chitta shakti. Prana shakti and chitta shakti, pingala and ida, are material forces and they represent the *ashuddha* tattwa, the 'impure' elements of the body in the sense that one thing is combined with another. The permutations and combinations which colour purity are known as ashuddha. Sushumna is not a combination of prana shakti and chitta shakti but a third, pure, force which allows purity to manifest because its nature is shuddha.

The mind is both pure and impure. If the mind were impure only, limited to its expressions of *vikshepa*, dissipation, and *vikalpa*, fancy, there would be no transcendental experience of consciousness. If the senses were impure only, because of their association with the world of objects, the withdrawal of the sensory process would be impossible. Even the senses are both pure and impure. They are impure in their association with the body, and pure in their true nature, as indriyas. The ruler of the indriyas is the mind. The mind is known as *Indra*, the king of thoughts and senses; Indra as the ruler of the deities is divine and also gross.

8

Shoonya Panchaka Dharanas 4–5

Turiya is the shuddha state and jagrat is the ashuddha state. When the mind is freed from attachment to the senses one begins moving from the jagrat state towards a purer state. One moves from being confined to the senses and manomaya kosha to being able to access the vijñanamaya kosha that one was previously unconscious of.

Awakening of sushumna leads to the opening of chakras, which signifies the transformation of the gross tattwa into subtle tattwa. Clay can be used to create many different objects, such as a pot or a brick, but when it is pounded, the object again becomes clay. The brick and the pot are gone, form and identity are gone. All that remains is the pure clay – it is a reversal of the outward flow of energy and consciousness which is the manifestation process. In the same way, the breaking down of conditions and patterns of the mind leads to the experience of pure expanded awareness. It is recognized as the awakening of chakras, which at each level becomes subtler, purer and more expansive.

The chakra mandalas are messages from the vijñanamaya kosha, which communicates in symbols. By practising dharana on the symbols, memories, inner knowledge and an understanding of the essence of life are unlocked. It is a process of purification, reducing the perception of things back to basics, like a reversal of the creation process – a movement back to the source.

SHOONYA DHARANA 4: VIJNANAMAYA SHOONYATA

In this dharana, shanmukhi mudra, also known as yoni mudra, is used: raising the hands, blocking the ears with the thumbs, eyes with first fingers, nostril with the second fingers and mouth with the third and fourth fingers. It is said in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (36):

*Kararuddhadrigastrena bhroobhedaad dvaararodhanaat;
Drishte bindau kramaat leene tanmadhye paramaa sthitih.*

By using the hands (as tools) to block the entrances in all directions, the eyebrow centre is pierced and bindu (or light) is seen. Being gradually absorbed within that, the supreme state is realized. (36)

Practice

Get ready for the practice of vijnanamaya shoonyata.

Take a comfortable meditation posture with the back and head straight, hands resting on the knees, and the eyes gently closed.

Take some time to adjust the body comfortably.

Check the whole body, releasing any points of tension and making any necessary adjustment.

Practise *kaya sthairyam*, let the whole body remain still throughout the practice.

The physical body is so still that you can clearly feel the breath moving inside.

Once the awareness is flowing smoothly and naturally with the breath, begin to concentrate on the gap between inhalation and exhalation which is felt inside the head.

Inhale up sushumna from mooladhara to sahasrara, experience the space, and then exhale back down sushumna. Establish this pattern.

Now, as you inhale, raise the hands for shanmukhi mudra.

Block the upper gates: the lips, nostrils, eyes and ears, and look into the space of chidakasha.

In chidakasha visualize the golden yellow square of *prithvi mahabhoota*, the earth element which rules mooladhara chakra. Hold the image clearly during the gap between breaths, release the upper gates, lower the hands back to the knees and simultaneously exhale down the spine.

Repeat this twice more, deepening your perception of the yantra of the earth element and the element of solidity in your body, mind and personality.

Realize, “I am not the earth mahabhoota. I am not the vijnanamaya kosha nor its experiences but the witness of it.” Repeat the sankalpa mentally, “I am not the earth mahabhoota. I am not the vijnanamaya kosha nor its experiences, I am the *drashta*, the witness.”

Now, become ready to end the practice.

Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness.

Feel the body. Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings.

Externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Practise palming then gently open the eyes.

Like this one can practise dharanas on all five mahabhootas, visualizing the silver crescent moon of *apas mahabhoota*, the water element of swadhisthana chakra, the red inverted triangle of *agni mahabhoota*, the fire element of manipura chakra, the blue hexagon of *vayu mahabhoota*, the air element of anahata chakra. Finally, one can practise dharana on the black circle of *akasha mahabhoota*, the space element of vishuddhi chakra, which contains all elements.

SHOONYA DHARANA 5: ANANDAMAYA SHOONYATA

In shoonya panchaka, the last stage is disconnecting the self or consciousness from the experiences of the mind, senses, samskaras and tattwas, and the attainment of the luminous state. The five forms of shoonya lead to this final stage of disconnection.

Awareness of nada

When the disconnection takes place, one becomes aware of nada, because sound vibration is at the basis of all experiences in life. In creation, nada is known as varna. At the individual level, nada manifests in sushumna, therefore, the source of individual creation is sushumna. The Upanishads, the Vedas and other systems of thought say that in the beginning was the primordial sound, and creation came forth from that sound. It is said in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (38–40):

*Anaahate paatrakarne' bhagnashabde sariddrute;
Shabdabrahmani nishnaatah param brahmaadhigachchhati.*

One who is adept in listening to the unstruck sound in anahata, (which is) uninterrupted like a rushing river, attains the supreme state of Brahma by mastery of *shabdabrahman*, the form of Brahman as sound. (38)

*Pranavaadisamuchchaaraat plutaante shoonyabhaavanaat;
Shoonyayaa parayaa shaktyaa shoonyataam eti Bhairavi.*

O Bhairavi, one who repeats the Pranava (*Aum*) perfectly, while concentrating on the void for protracted periods, experiences the void, and by that void the transcendental shakti (is revealed). (39)

*Yasya kasyaapi varnasya poorvaantaav anubhaavayet;
Shoonyayaa shoonyabhooto'sau shoonyaakaarah pumaan bhavet.*

Whoever contemplates even on the *matras* or letters (of *Aum*) from first to last, in the form of void, verily that sadhaka by meditation on the void becomes the void. (40)

Yogis who have gone into deep states of meditation have experienced nada, but in order to explain the sound, they have to use the varnas 'A', 'U' and 'M'. If *Aum* were really composed of these three varnas, it could not be transcendental, because varnas are not transcendental. Nevertheless, varnas are an expression of nada, which is the basis of life.

It is possible to exist without breathing. Scientific monitoring of yogis in samadhi has shown that the heartbeat slows down and the pulse becomes so light it can't be felt. In the state of samadhi it is nada which supports life and not breath or prana. The pranas are contained within the body, but cannot support the body. In samadhi, the force of nada alone supports the body for as long as the yogi wants the body to be supported.

When the experience of nada takes place, a great magnetic force pulls the pranas out of their confined state within the body into *vyoma* or space. What is considered to be an achievement to ordinary people is only an internal transformation for a yogi. In that state of internal transformation, senses, mind, and ahamkara become shoonya. In that pure state of shoonya, consciousness has to become one with the supreme intelligence.

Practice

Sit down comfortably.

Close the eyes and observe the body internally. Release all points of tension and tightness so that your attention will not be distracted by any pain or discomfort during the practice.

Become aware of steadiness and stillness in the physical body.

Disconnect awareness from the outer experiences of body and mind and become centred in the state of *akasha*, inner space.

In this space become free from all distractions and diversions. There are absolutely no physical or mental diversions and distractions.

Remain focused in the experience of space and internal silence.

Now visualize a stream of light coming down from the heavens and entering the crown of your head. See the light piercing the top of the head at the point of sahasrara, and flowing down the centre of the spinal pathway to mooladhara chakra at the perineum.

See one straight beam of flowing light, sushumna. Visualize it in the middle of the back.

Intensify the awareness of the stream of pure light from the crown of the head to the perineum. Remain conscious of the state of steadiness, silence and peace which pervades body, mind and your entire nature.

Bring your attention to sahasrara chakra at the crown of the head. Experience the point where the beam of light enters the body.

Holding your awareness at sahasrara, begin to chant *Aum* with a very short 'Au' sound and a long 'M', which becomes a humming sound. With the 'M' sound your awareness descends through the sushumna pathway from sahasrara, along the beam of light, down to the base at the perineum, where mooladhara chakra is located.

Hold the breath outside for a moment, and then inhale back up the sushumna pathway.

Continue.

Now, become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness and take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the whole body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the whole body and the breath moving inside.

Be aware of the sounds far away and nearby with the attitude of a witness.

Externalize the awareness and be aware of the time of day and the surroundings.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre and see a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eyes.

The dharanas for each of the koshas can be practised independently until mastery is achieved at each level. This practice results in greater freedom from sense impressions and a realignment within one's self. The constructs of one's thoughts and emotions are perceived more clearly, one begins to understand the cause of different thoughts and emotions that arise within, and free oneself from their compulsions. One's awareness expands into different ways of looking at the world. One becomes more harmonious and begins to see the same nature, the same atma, in all beings.



9

Integrated Practices of Shoonya Dharanas

Here are three basic dharanas and a more advanced combined practice. They are not for everyday but with proper guidance can be practised on auspicious days, perhaps the *poornima*, full moon, day of each month, or as an *anushthana*, practised consecutively for a few days at some auspicious time like the nine nights of *navaratri*.

However, we repeat here that these practices are for information – to preserve the vidya, knowledge and understanding, of dharana practices. One can read and understand them, but should not practise them without the guidance of guru or an experienced sadhaka.

The dharanas of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* are multi-dimensional. They represent a path into uncharted depths of consciousness and they have been passed down in the tradition of guru and disciple – practising without the instruction and guidance of the guru can be hazardous.

THREE INTEGRATED PRACTICES

Integrated dharana I : annamaya and manomaya shoonyata

Sit in a comfortable meditation posture.

Release any pressure, tightness, or tension that you may feel, so that the body is free from the physical distraction of discomfort or pain.

The body should be in a state of absolute ease. You may lie down if you wish, but be sure that you do not sleep.

Place the hands wherever comfortable, either on the knees or in front. After adjusting your position, gently close your eyes.

Observe the body internally. Observe each and every part of the body internally.

Now bring your attention to hridayakasha. Focus your awareness in the region of anahata chakra, in the region of the heart, not in chidakasha.

With the awareness fixed in hridayakasha, develop the experience of silence of mind and stillness of body.

Nothing exists around or within you except physical stillness and mental tranquillity.

Allow your awareness to roam free in hridayakasha. Do not try to pinpoint it at any one specific place.

Deepen the experience of physical stillness and mental silence.

Imagine the body in the form of an empty shell. Like an egg, if you remove everything from inside, only the shell remains.

Experience your body in the form of an empty shell.

Say to yourself mentally, “I am not this body, I am not the experience associated with the mind.”

Identify and deepen the awareness of *akasha tattwa*, space, and see the whole body filled with *akasha tattwa*.

The empty shell of the body is filled with *akasha tattwa*.

Now, become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness. Feel the body.

Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings.

Externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eyes.

Integrated dharana 2: pingala/ida – sun/moon rotation

Sit down in a comfortable meditative posture with the body upright and straight. Gently close the eyes.

Become aware of the whole body and stillness. In a state of comfort, experience stillness of the body.

Once you are able to experience the body stillness, visualize the spinal passage.

See the chakras located alongside the spinal passage in the form of luminosity. Visualize each centre as a point of light: mooladhara, at the perineum, below the tip of the spine, swadhisthana, about five cm above, in the sacral area, manipura, behind the navel, anahata behind the heart, vishuddhi, behind the throat pit and ajna, behind the eyebrow centre, at the mid-brain.

Visualize the chakras in the form of globes of light, shining brightly.

Focusing on the chakras as luminous points, start the ascending movement of awareness through pingala nadi from mooladhara to ajna with the visualization of the sun. Move your awareness down through the chakras and ida nadi visualizing the moon. Ascend in time with the musical notes as they are played: sa – re – ga – ma – pa – dha.

Continue the rotation, but coordinate the movement with repetition of the numbers from one to six. Ascend with the visualization of the sun: one (mooladhara), two (swadhisthana), three (manipura), four (anahata), five (vishuddhi), six (ajna) visualizing the moon while the breath pauses. Descend with visualization of the moon: six (ajna), five (vishuddhi), four (anahata), three (manipura), two (swadhisthana), one (mooladhara).

Continue the rotation, but coordinate the movement with a tapping. While ascending with the visualization of the sun: tap (mooladhara), tap (swadhisthana), tap (manipura), tap (anahata), tap (vishuddhi), tap (ajna). Then reverse the movement while descending and follow the path of the moon: tap (ajna), tap (vishuddhi), tap (anahata), tap (manipura), tap (swadhisthana), tap (mooladhara).

Now stop the practice and just be aware of the body. Total awareness of body, stillness and silence.

Chant *Aum* three times and experience the vibration of *Aum* pervading the entire body internally.

Now, become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness. Feel the body.

Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings.

Externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eyes.

Integrated dharana 3: sushumna darshan

Sit down comfortably. Place the hands on top of the thighs or in front, as you prefer. Close the eyes gently.

Observe the body internally. Release all points of tension and tightness so that your attention will not be distracted during the practice.

Become aware of the steadiness of posture.

Become aware of the stillness in the physical body. Disconnect awareness from the outer experiences of body and mind. Become centred in the state of akasha, inner space. In this space become free from all distractions and diversions. There are absolutely no physical diversions and distractions, no mental diversions and distractions. Remain focused in the experience of space.

Remain focused in the experience of internal silence.

Remain focused in the experience of internal peace.

Now visualize a stream of light coming down from the heavens and entering the crown of your head. See the light piercing the top of the head at the point of sahasrara, and flowing down the centre of the spinal pathway to the point of mooladhara chakra at the perineum.

See one straight beam of light, one straight flow of light. This flow, stream or beam of light is sushumna.

Visualize it at the centre of the spinal passage, in the middle of the back.

Intensify the awareness of the stream of pure light. Imagine that you are impaled by this light from the crown of the head to the perineum. While you are aware of this stream of light remain conscious of the state of steadiness, silence and peace which pervades body, mind and your entire nature.

Bring your attention to the region of sahasrara.

Be aware of the *brahmarandhra*, the crown of the head.

Experience the point where the stream of light enters the body at the crown of the head. Bring your attention to that point.

While holding your awareness at sahasrara chakra, begin to chant *Aum*, the primal nada, with a very short 'Au' sound and a long 'M', which becomes a humming sound.

With the 'M' sound your awareness descends through the sushumna pathway, from sahasrara along the beam of light, down to the base at the perineum, where mooladhara chakra is located.

Hold the breath outside for a moment. Then inhale back up the sushumna pathway.

Now, become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness.

Take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the body. Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings.

Externalize the awareness.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eyes.

COMBINED SHOONYA DHARANA PRACTICE

After assimilating these new perspectives, the dharanas can also be combined as follows.

Practice

Sit in a comfortable meditation posture. Release any pressure, tightness, or tension that you may feel, so that the body is free from the physical distraction of discomfort or pain. The body should be in a state of absolute ease. Place the hands wherever comfortable, either on the knees or in front. After adjusting your position, gently close your eyes. Observe the body internally. Observe each and every part of the body internally and be still.

Now bring your attention down to *hridayakasha*. Focus your awareness in the region of *anahata chakra*, in the region of the heart.

With the awareness fixed in *hridayakasha*, develop the experience of silence of mind and stillness of body. Nothing exists around or within you except physical stillness and mental tranquillity. Allow your awareness to roam free in *hridayakasha*.

Deepen the experience of physical stillness and mental silence.

Imagine the body in the form of an empty shell, only the shell remains. Experience your body in the form of an empty shell. Say to yourself mentally, “I am not this body, I am not the senses, I am not the experience associated with the mind.”

Identify and deepen the awareness of *akasha tattwa*, space, and see the whole body filled with *akasha tattwa*. The empty shell of the body is filled with *akasha tattwa*, space. Once you are able to experience the body stillness, visualize the spinal passage. See the chakras located alongside the spinal passage in the form of luminosity.

Visualize each centre as a point of light: *mooladhara*, *swadhisthana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *vishuddhi*, and *ajna*,

behind the eyebrow centre. Visualize the chakras in the form of globes of light.

Focusing on the chakras as luminous points, start the ascending movement of awareness from mooladhara to ajna with the visualization of the sun following the path of pingala nadi. Move your awareness up through the chakras in time with the musical notes: sa – re – ga – ma – pa – dha. Move your awareness down from ajna to mooladhara with visualization of the moon, following ida nadi.

Continue.

Next time you reach mooladhara, rest there for a few breaths.

Continue the rotation, but coordinate the movement with repetition of the chakras from one to six. Ascend visualizing the sun: one (mooladhara), two (swadhisthana), three (manipura), four (anahata), five (vishuddhi), six (ajna). Descend visualizing the moon: six (ajna), five (vishuddhi), four (anahata), three (manipura), two (swadhisthana), one (mooladhara).

At mooladhara, pause, rest from the practice.

Then continue the rotation, but coordinate the movement with a tapping sound. Ascend with the visualization of the sun through mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna. Then reverse the movement while descending and follow the path of the moon: ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara. Now stop the practice and just be aware of stillness and silence.

Remain focused in the experience of internal silence.

Remain focused in the experience of internal peace.

Now visualize a stream of light coming down from the heavens and entering the crown of your head at sahasrara, and flowing down the centre of the spinal pathway to mooladhara chakra at the perineum.

See one beam of light, one straight flow of light. This stream of light is sushumna. Visualize it at the centre of the spinal passage, in the middle of the back.

Intensify the awareness of the stream of pure light, the beam of light flows from the crown of the head to the perineum. While you are aware of this stream of light, remain conscious of the state of steadiness, silence and peace which pervades your whole body, mind and entire nature. Bring your attention to the region of sahasrara and brahmarandhra. Bring your attention to that point where the stream of light enters the body at the crown of the head. While holding your awareness at sahasrara chakra, begin to chant *Aum*, the primal nada, with a very short 'Au' sound and a long 'M', which becomes a humming sound. Your awareness descends through the sushumna pathway, from sahasrara along the beam of light down to the perineum, where mooladhara chakra is located. Hold the breath outside for a moment, then inhale raising the awareness back up the sushumna pathway.

Continue.

Now, become ready to end the practice. Let the breath become the main focus of your awareness.

Take a couple of slightly deeper breaths.

Feel the body. Be aware of the body in its meditation posture. Be aware of the limbs, head, trunk, whole body.

Be aware of the surroundings.

Externalize the awareness. Be aware of the external sounds and the surroundings.

Be aware of the time of day.

Bring the awareness to the eyebrow centre. See a tiny point of light there.

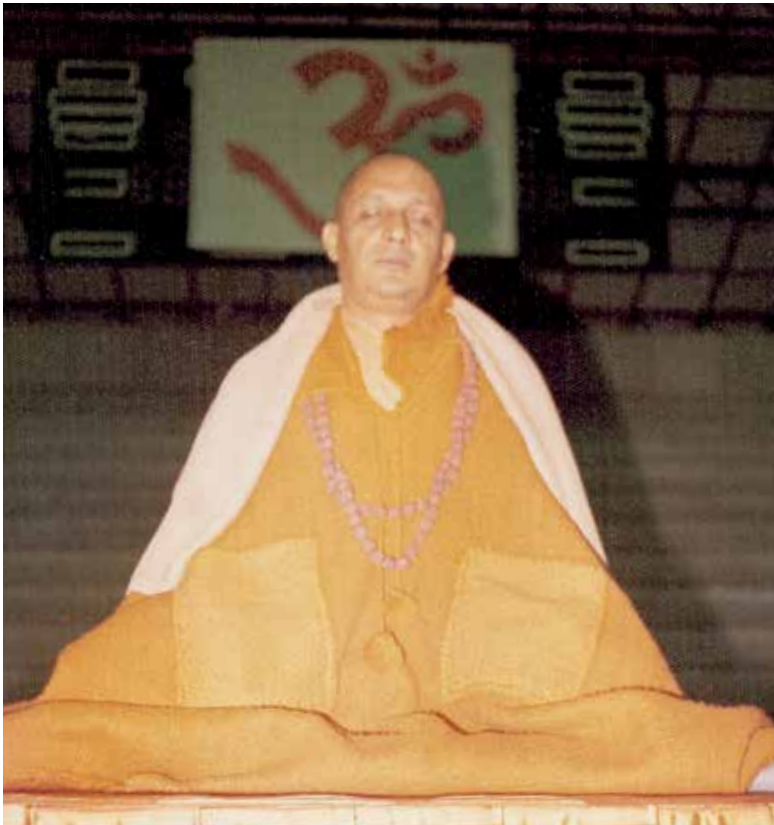
Watching this point of light, chant the mantra *Aum* three times.

Rub the palms of your hands together and when warmth is created, place the palms over the closed eyes. Gently open the eyes.

A little guidance has been given on two sequences: the shvasa dharanas and the pancha shoonyata dharanas, and they can definitely take one from an externalized state into deeper and more expansive states of consciousness, but remember the lines from the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Hari Om Tat Sat



Index of Dharanas

Shvasa dharana 1.....	25
Shvasa dharana 2.....	28
Shvasa dharana 3.....	29
Shvasa dharana 4.....	32
Shvasa dharana 5.....	34
Shoonya dharana 1: annamaya shoonyata.....	48
Shoonya dharana 2: manomaya shoonyata.....	52
Shoonya dharana 3: pranamaya shoonyata	55
Shoonya dharana 4: vijñanamaya shoonyata	65
Shoonya dharana 5: anandamaya shoonyata	67
Integrated dharana 1: annamaya and manomaya shoonyata	72
Integrated dharana 2: pingala/ida – sun/moon rotation	73
Integrated dharana 3: sushumna darshan	75
Combined shoonya dharana practice	77

Glossary

Advaita – non-duality

Agni mahabhoota – fire element; fire principle. See Mahabhoota

Ahamkara – faculty of ego, awareness of the existence of ‘I’

Ajna chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated at the medulla oblongata at the top of the spinal column in the mid-brain; seat of intuition, higher knowledge; third eye

Akasha mahabhoota – space element

Anahata chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the sternum; associated physically with the cardiac plexus, heart and lungs, seat of emotions, and of atma, the spirit, within us all

Ananda – pure bliss; natural state of consciousness

Anandamaya kosha – sheath or body of bliss; the innermost wrapper or sheath of the embodied spirit

Annamaya kosha – sheath or body of matter; the sphere of existence created by food, maintained by food and which ultimately becomes food, i.e. the body

Antahkarana – literally, ‘inner tool’, inner organ of consciousness, consisting of: ahamkara, manas, buddhi and chitta

Anusandhana – enquiry; exploration; investigation

Anushthana – a resolve to perform a sadhana, often mantra sadhana, with absolute discipline for a requisite period of time; a fixed course of sadhana

Apana vayu – one of the pancha pranas or vayus, it is located between the navel and the perineum. It flows downward and controls elimination and reproduction

Apas mahabhoota – water element, water principle

Arohan – upwards; moving the awareness upwards with inhalation

Asakti – attachment

Ashtanga yoga – the eight limbs of yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi

Ashudda – impure

Aum – the universal cosmic mantra representing the four states of consciousness; the sound indicating the Supreme Reality or Brahman; conveys concepts of omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence

Avastha – state; see four states of mind: Jagrat, Sushupti, Swapna, Turiya

Awarohan – downwards; moving the awareness downwards with exhalation

Bhoota – spirit

Bindu – seed, source, drop, semen; point of potential energy and consciousness; the basis from which emanated the first principle according to the tantra shastra; nucleus; psychic centre located in the brain

Brahma granthi – psychic knot tying the awareness to the material dimension

Brahmarandhra – crown of the head; the fontanelle; opening in the crown of the head through which the soul is said to escape on leaving the body

Buddhi – discerning, discriminating aspect of mind; aspect of mind closest to pure consciousness; one of the four parts of the antahkarana, or inner instrument

Chakra – circle, wheel or vortex; pranic/psychic centre; confluence point of energy flows (nadis) in the body; the seven major chakras for descent of divine energy for human evolution are sahasrara, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara

- Chandra** – moon; representing the mental energy. See Ida nadi
- Chidakasha** – the space of consciousness; the inner space visualized in meditation behind the closed eyes or in the region of ajna chakra
- Chitta** – individual consciousness, including the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; thinking, concentration, attention, enquiry; storehouse of memory or samskaras; one of the four parts of the antahkarana, or inner instrument
- Chitta shakti** – the power of pure consciousness; mental force governing the subtle dimensions; the flow in ida nadi
- Dakshinachara** – the right hand path of tantra, connected with pingala nadi and the expressive nature
- Darshan** – philosophy
- Dharana** – practice of concentration or complete attention; sixth stage of ashtanga yoga described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as holding or binding the mind to one point
- Dhyana** – spontaneous state of meditation; extended absorption or one-pointedness of mind through concentration on either a form, thought or sound; seventh stage of Sage Patanjali's ashtanga yoga
- Drashta** – witness, uninvolved observer, onlooker, seer; the consciousness which knows what is going on; the inner self
- Dukha** – suffering, pain
- Dwaita** – duality
- Dweshha** – repulsion, aversion; hatred, enmity, dislike; one of the five causes of suffering (kleshas) described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as aversion to the unpleasant
- Granthi** – knot; psychic knot tying the mind to a particular dimension of awareness
- Guna** – quality; the three gunas, qualities or aspects of prakriti are sattwa, rajas and tamas
- Hridayakasha** – psychic space of the heart centre where the creative hues of emotion are observed; experienced between manipura and vishuddhi chakras, associated with anahata chakra

Iccha – wish, desire, will

Iccha Shakti – creative force or that desire which is the first manifestation of the greater mind

Ida nadi – a major pranic channel running from the left side of mooladhara chakra to the left side of ajna chakra, governing the left side of the body and the right side of the brain. The ida energy flow criss-crosses the spine through the major chakras between mooladhara and ajna, conducting energy manifesting as the mental force, chitta shakti; also called chandra nadi as the lunar energy flows through it

Indriya – sense organ; power of the senses

Ishta – object of desire; the chosen ideal; the particular form of God one is devoted to

Ishta deva, ishta devata – personal deity, one's favourite symbol of the Supreme

Ishwara – non-changing, indestructible principle or quality; higher reality; God

Ishwara pranidhana – surrender to the eternal reality

Jagrat avastha – a waking state; awakened

Jagrit – awake

Jnana – knowledge, cognition, wisdom; higher knowledge derived from meditation or from inner experience

Jnana marga – the path of knowing and understanding

Jnanendriya – organ of sense perceptions and knowledge; five in number, viz. ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose

Kaama – desire

Kaamagra chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated at the tip of the penis in males and at the clitoris in females; associated with desire. Awareness ascends from here to mooladhara and then through the major chakras of the spine

Kapala chakras – The chakras within the head – including the pranic/psychic/spiritual centres of lalana (moordha), nasikagra, ajna, manas, soma, nirvana, bindu and sahasrara

Karma marga – the process of forward movement, activity and creative dynamism

Karmendriya – motor organ; there are five physical organs of action, viz. vocal cords, hands, feet, genital organ and anus

Kaya sthairyam – stillness of body and mind

Kosha – sheath or body; a dimension of experience and existence

Kriya – action

Kriya shakti – power or faculty of acting

Kriya yoga – practices of kundalini yoga designed to speed the evolution of humanity

Kumbhaka – internal or external retention of the breath

Kundalini – the evolutionary energy in a human being; spiritual energy; Devi described as the potential energy of a human being dormant in mooladhara chakra, which, when awakened, awakens the chakras, resulting in progressive enlightenment

Kundalini yoga – path of yoga which awakens the dormant spiritual force, kundalini

Lalana chakra – a minor chakra at the back of the throat above the palate

Laya – dissolution; union, fusion

Laya yoga – union by absorption; yoga of conscious dissolution of individuality

Mahabhoota – the five great elements viz. space, air, fire, water and earth

Mahat – greater mind; the total mind which includes manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara; universal intellect

Manas – finite mind, rational mind; the mind concerned with senses, thought and counter-thought; perception, intelligence

Manas chakra – pranic/psychic centre situated within the ajna chakra system. The subtle controller of the five senses, this sense-mind is intimately related to ahamkara, buddhi and prakriti. The chakra shines white with six petals coloured according to the five senses: smell – yellow, taste – white, form – red, touch – ash, sound – white; and sleep (absence of the senses – black

Manas shakti – mental energy

Manipura chakra – literally, ‘city of jewels’; psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the navel; associated with the solar plexus and digestive organs and mentally with willpower; source of vitality and energy

Manomaya kosha – mental sheath or body; mental sphere of life and awareness

Maya – means by which Brahman creates the phenomenal world; power of creation; illusive power; in Vedanta philosophy, the two powers of maya are: 1. the power of veiling, and 2. the power of projection; in Samkhya philosophy, maya is another name for Prakriti

Mimamsa – deep reflection, analysis, school of Indian philosophy

Mooladhara chakra – the lowest psychic/pranic centre in the human body; situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women; associated physically with the excretory and reproductive organs, and mentally with the instinctive nature; spiritually it is the seat of kundalini

Mukti – release, liberation, final absolution of the consciousness from the chain of birth and death and from the illusion of maya

Nada – sound; subtle sound or vibration created by the union of the Shiva and Shakti tattwas; the first manifestation of the unmanifested Absolute

Nadanusandhana – discovering and exploring nada

Nadi – flow; a river or channel of energy; psychic current; subtle channel in the pranic body, conducting the flow of shakti; comparable to the meridians of acupuncture

Nasikagra chakra – pranic/psychic centre situated at the tip of the nose, directly connected with mooladhara chakra

Nidra – fourth instinct; deep sleep; isolation from the mind and senses; disassociation

Nirvikalpa samadhi – state in which the mind ceases to function and only pure consciousness remains; super-conscious state where mental modifications cease to exist, resulting in transcendence of the manifest world

Niyama – observance of rules or rules of personal discipline to render the mind tranquil in preparation for meditation; the second step of the eight limbs (ashtanga yoga) of Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*

Nyaya – philosophy of logic

Patanjali, Sage – author of the *Yoga Sutras*; an ancient rishi who codified the system of raja yoga including ashtanga yoga

Pingala nadi – a major pranic channel in the body which conducts the dynamic pranic force manifesting as prana shakti; from the right side of mooladhara chakra it criss-crosses the spine through the major chakras to the right side of ajna chakra; associated with the mundane realm of experience and externalized awareness; also called surya nadi as the solar energy flows through it

Prakriti – individual nature; Nature; manifest and unmanifest nature composed of the three gunas; the active principle of manifest energy; counterpart of purusha in Samkhya philosophy

Prana – vital energy force sustaining life and creation, permeating the whole of creation and existing in both the macrocosmos and microcosmos

Prana shakti – energy; dynamic solar force governing the dimension of matter; energy flow of pingala nadi related to externalization of mind; the force of prana

Pranamaya kosha – energy sheath, or vital pranic body composed of chakras, nadis, vayus, pranic vibration and the rhythm of pranic forces

Pratyahara – restraining the sensory and motor organs; withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects; training the senses to follow the mind within; fifth stage of ashtanga yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*

Pratyaya – seeds or impressions in the field of consciousness which do not disappear even in the first stages of samadhi; content of mind

Prithvi mahabhoota – earth element, earth principle

Purusha – literally, ‘the one who lives in the city (of the body)’; the soul; pure consciousness according to Samkhya philosophy, undefiled and unlimited by contact with prakriti or matter; a man; a human being

Raga – passion; affection; attachment; one of the five causes of affliction (kleshas) described in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* as attraction or attachment to what gives pleasure.

Rajas – one of the three gunas or attributes; dynamism; state of activity; creativity combined with full ego involvement

Rudra granthi – literally, ‘knot of Rudra (Shiva)’; psychic knot within ajna chakra which symbolizes attachment to siddhis or higher mental attributes. As the psychic block is overcome, the sense of personal identity ceases to block one’s identification with the cosmic consciousness. See Granthi

Sadhaka – one who has practised sadhana regularly for a long time; a spiritual aspirant

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly

Sahasrara chakra – ‘thousand petalled lotus;’ abode of Shiva or superconsciousness; highest chakra or psychic centre, it symbolizes the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms and is located at the crown of the head

Samadhi – the culmination of meditation, state of oneness of mind with the object of concentration and the universal consciousness; self-realization; the eighth stage of raja yoga

Samkhya – one of the six systems of Indian philosophy. Attributed to Sage Kapila, Samkhya is a spiritual science based on the division of all existence into the two eternal principles of purusha and prakriti, and the twenty-three elements of creation; the philosophical basis of the yoga system

Samskara – mental impression stored in the subtle body as an archetype; the impressions which condition one’s nature, causing one to react or respond in a certain way

Satchidananda – literally, ‘truth-consciousness-bliss;’ the nature of Supreme Consciousness

Sattwa – one of the three gunas, or attributes of nature; state of luminosity, harmony, equilibrium and purity

Savikalpa samadhi – a kind of samadhi in which the mind still retains its material impressions (distinctions such as between subject and object, or of the knower and the known)

Shakti – primal energy; manifest consciousness; power, ability, capacity, strength, energy; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness; in Hindu mythology Shakti is often symbolized as a divine woman

Shoonya – void, state of transcendental consciousness

Shoonya panchaka – five spaces or dimensions of consciousness and manifestation

Shuddhi – purification, purity

Shvasa – breath

Siddhi – perfection, psychic powers

Soma chakra – also known as Indu or Chandra chakra. Pranic/psychic centre situated above manas chakra in the ajna chakra system. Coloured moon-white with 16 moon-white petals of mercy, gentleness, patience, non-attachment, control, excellent qualities, joy, spiritual love, humility, reflection, restfulness, seriousness, effort, controlled emotion, magnanimity and concentration. Seat of buddhi and knowledge through wisdom rather than through the senses

Sukha – pleasure, enjoyment

Surya – sun; vital pranic energy governing the world of matter

Sushumna – central energy flow (nadi) in the spine; it conducts the kundalini or spiritual force from mooladhara chakra to sahasrara chakra; the main energy flow related to transcendental awareness; situated in the spinal cord of the human body, it opens when balance is achieved between ida and pingala nadis

Sushupti – third dimension of consciousness; deep sleep or unconscious realm of mind; profound repose undisturbed by the senses

Swabhava – one's own essential nature

Swadhisthana chakra – literally, 'one's own abode'; second psychic/pranic centre associated with the sacral plexus

and governing the urogenital system; the storehouse of subconscious impressions

Swapna – second dimension of consciousness; subconscious realm of mind, state of dreaming, the mind is looking inwards, seeing the internal experience, not the external objects

Swaroopa – one's own form or shape; natural state or condition; essential nature; true constitution

Tamas – quality of stability; ignorance; one of the three gunas

Tanmatra – subtle nature; quality or essence of the elements and the associated five senses. In Yoga philosophy the five tanmatras are the faculties of hearing, touch, seeing, tasting and smelling

Tantra – most ancient universal science and culture which deals with the transition of human nature from the present level of evolution and understanding to a transcendental level of knowledge, experience and awareness; a particular path of sadhana including mantra, yantra and other esoteric practices

Tantra shastras – scriptures especially relevant to the fourth or present age (kali yuga) cast in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and his female consort Shakti or Parvati

Tattwa – 'that-ness'; true essential nature; an element, a primary substance; another name for mahabhoota

Turiya – fourth dimension of consciousness; superconsciousness; simultaneous awareness of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind which links and transcends them; a state of liberation

Uttara Mimamsa – one of the six principle systems of Indian philosophy, usually called Vedanta; deals mainly with Brahman, the Supreme Reality

Vaisheshika – one of the six principal systems of Indian philosophy

Vamachara – left hand ritual of tantras connected with ida nadi and deeply introverted states

Varna – group of letters in the Sanskrit alphabet; language

Vasana – subtle impressions which are the seeds of desires

Vayu mahabhoota – air element, air principle

Vedachara – path of knowledge

Vedanta – one of the six principle systems of Indian philosophy; literally, ‘the last part of the Vedas’; the school of Hindu thought based primarily on the Upanishads; the doctrine of non-dualism (Advaita)

Vedas – ancient texts revealed to the sages and saints of India, explaining and regulating every aspect of life from Supreme Reality to worldly affairs; four in number: Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva, each of which are further divided into the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads; the oldest books in the library of mankind, parts of them revealed to sages and seers before 5000 BC

Vijnana – intuitive ability of mind; essential knowledge, wisdom; the principle of pure intelligence; understanding; discrimination, discernment; science

Vijnanamaya kosha – astral or psychic (higher mental) sheath or body consisting of the principle of intellect or buddhi, the subtler level of our own existence with its vision, intuition, wisdom and power of understanding; the covering of the self which is made of knowledge

Vikalpa – oscillation, indecision, doubt

Vikshepa – dissipation

Vishnu granthi – psychic knot which ties the awareness to the emotional realm and relationships

Vishuddhi Chakra – literally, ‘centre of purification’, the psychic/pranic centre located at the level of the throat pit or the thyroid gland; it is the psychic centre particularly connected with purification and communication

Vritti – a modification arising in the mind related to a thought pattern; a particular state or condition; whirlpool

Vyoma – space

Yama – self-restraints or rules of conduct which render the mind tranquil; first stage of the eight limbs of yoga (ashtanga yoga) of Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*

Yantra – a geometric symbol of cosmic power designed to unleash the hidden potential energy and consciousness used in meditation and concentration practices

Yoga – union; the root is yuj, meaning ‘to join’, ‘to yoke’; a system of practice leading to a state of union between the individual and universal awareness; practices, philosophy and lifestyle to achieve peace, power and spiritual wisdom as well as perfect health, a sound mind and a balanced personality; one of the six main systems of Indian philosophy

Yogachara – practice or observance of yoga



Vijnana Bhairava Tantra is a text of Kashmir Shaivism of the seventh century, and its basis is a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati. Shiva explains methods to attain the ultimate goal of tantra: expansion of mind and liberation of energy. Through the wealth of one hundred and twelve practices of concentration or *dharanas* the sadhaka is led to explore the philosophy of tantra and make it applicable in daily life.

Significance of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra presents a compilation of satsangs and dharanas practices given by Swami Niranjan-ananda Saraswati in 2002 to a group of sadhakas from Mumbai.

The seminar was imbued with an expansive view of life made relevant to each sadhaka, and this can extend to the life of each sincere practitioner who reads this book.



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